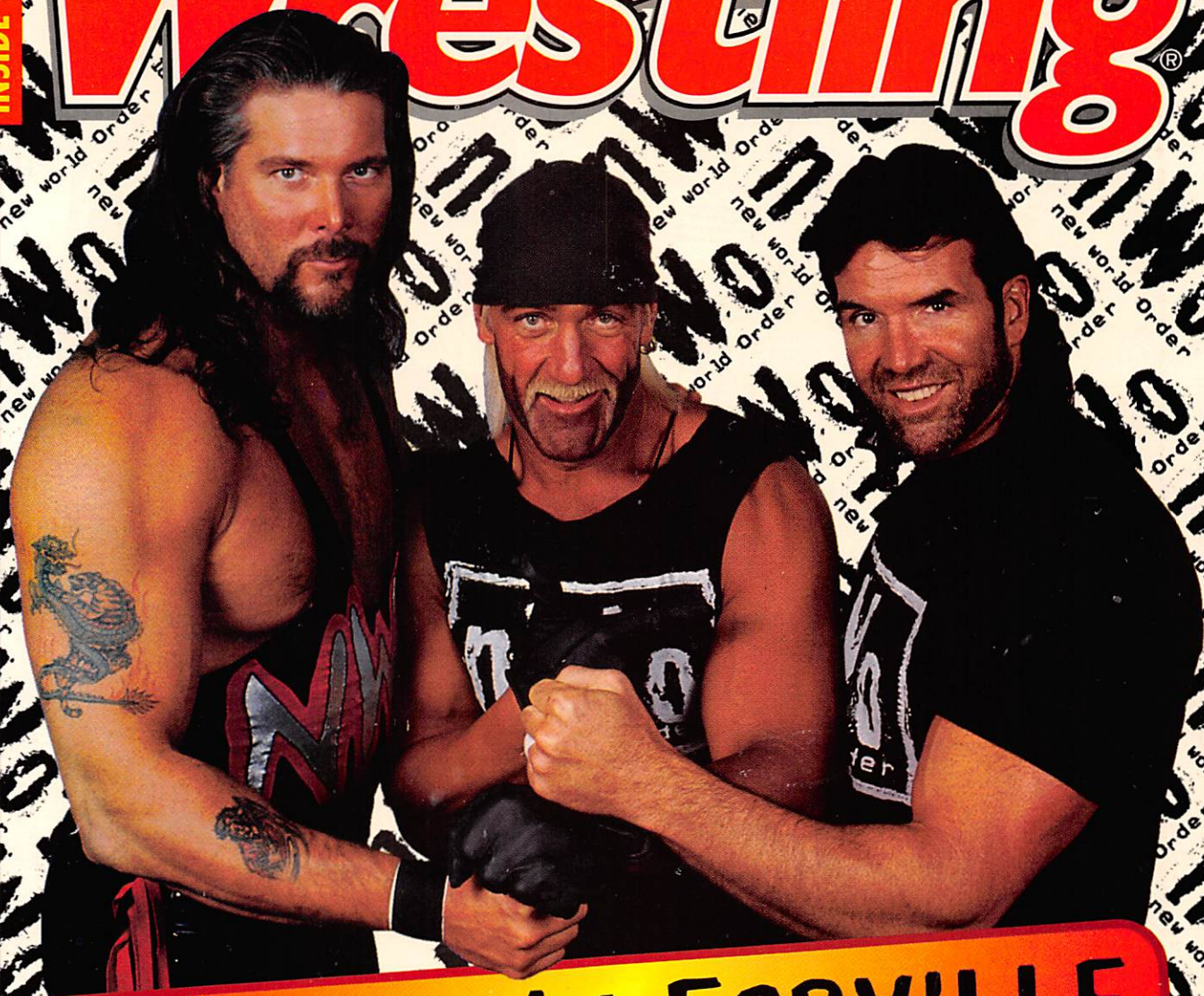
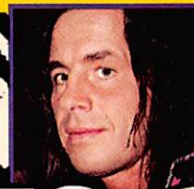
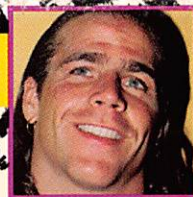


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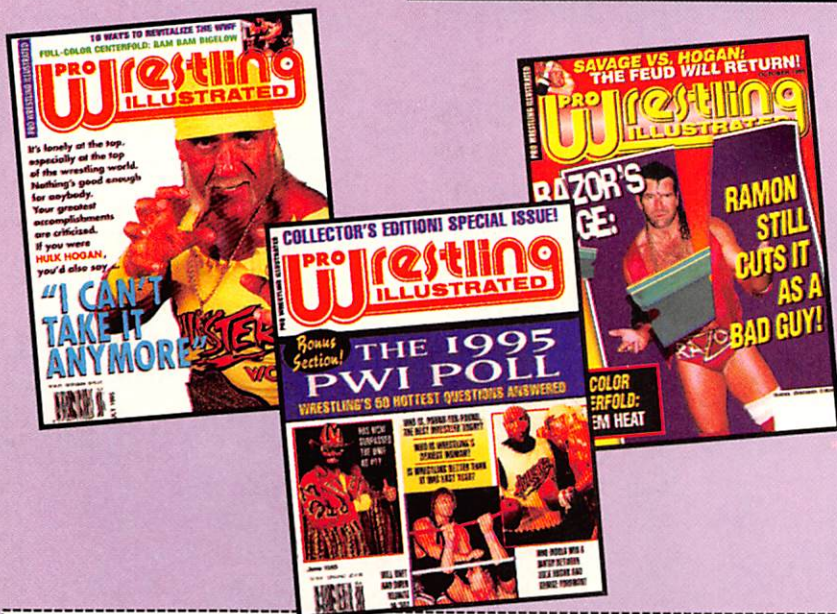
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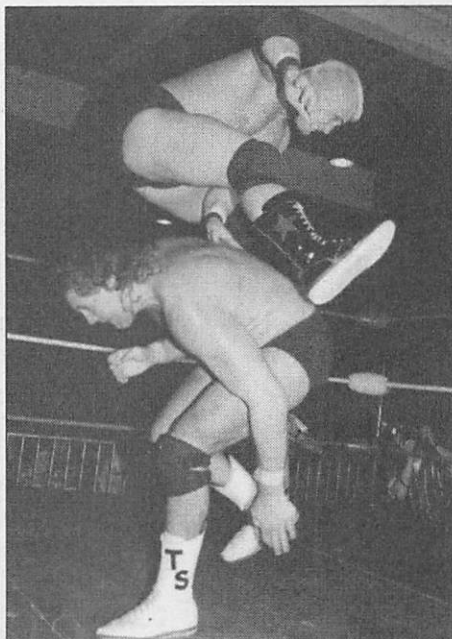
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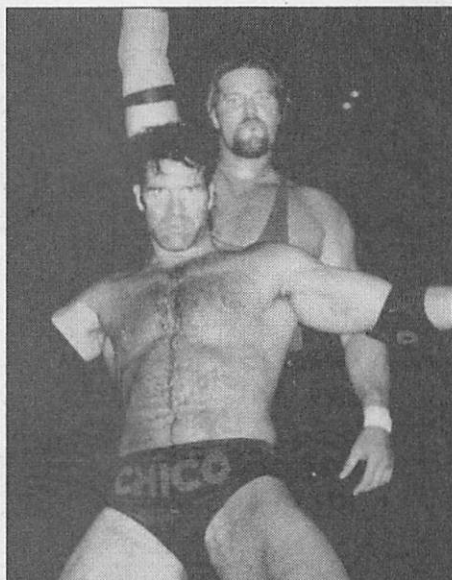
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KAREN

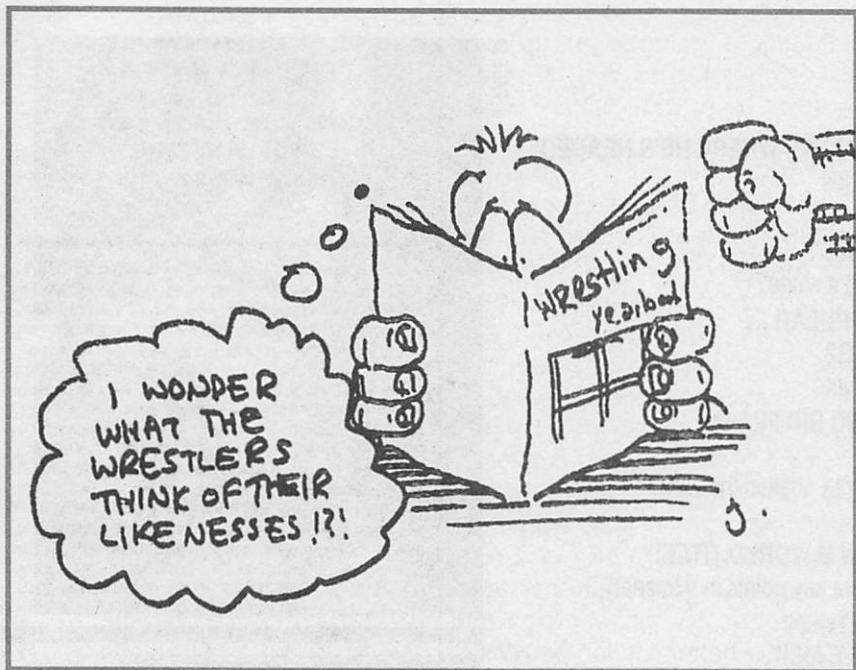
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THE GOOD NEWS IS ...

I loved the caricatures in your *INSIDE WRESTLING Presents Wrestling Yearbook* (Winter 1996). Australian artist Jason Conlan has a great feel for the wrestlers' personalities and features. His artwork was great comic relief from the scrutinizing scouting reports of each wrestler. He should be commended for doing such a great job. I hope to see more of his cartoons in future issues.

HOLLY BERGMAN
Madison, WI



Most of our readers liked the caricatures Jason Conlan did for us in our *Wrestling Yearbook*. Sunny didn't like the one of her, though. It appears Mr. Conlan had some inkling that a few wrestlers might not appreciate his work.

[Editor's note: Jason Conlan's artwork is now featured monthly in *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, along with our other regularly featured artist, Jerry Workman. Senior Writer Steve Anderson's cartoons still appear monthly in *The Wrestler*.]

... AND THE BAD NEWS

How could your magazine run a cartoon like the one of me holding the WWF World tag team belts in front of the faces of Billy and Bart Gunn? Well, I know that I am much better looking than either one of those cowboys, and I know the fans would much rather see my face than theirs, but I don't like the insinuation that I take the spotlight away from the wrestlers I manage. I know that it might seem that way since the fans all cheer for me, but that's not the case.

When I manage a wrestler, that wrestler is the most important person. I am more concerned with helping that wrestler win a title than promoting myself. I can't help it if the fans adore me. So next time you have one of your art school flunkies draw my likeness, make sure he gets all of my good sides. Otherwise, *INSIDE WRESTLING* will be on my bad side.

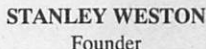
SUNNY
Stamford, CT

LOSING HIS TOUCH

I'm sick of hearing about what a managerial genius Jim Cornette is. If brains were food, Cornette's would be a TV dinner.

He blew any chance Davey Boy Smith had of winning the WWF World championship by involving Diana Smith, who proved to be more of a distraction to Davey Boy than to Shawn Michaels. When Yokozuna and Owen Hart lost the WWF World tag team titles, he had to bring in Clarence Mason to clean up the mess he made, and I still don't see any gold around Vader's waist yet.

The glory days of *The Midnight Express* are a distant memory,



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INSIDE WRESTLING, Volume 29, Number 2, (ISSN: 1047-9562) is published monthly, with an additional issue in December, by London Publishing Co., 7002 W. Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002. Periodicals rate postage paid at Ambler, PA 19002 and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: INSIDE WRESTLING, P.O. Box 910, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Single copy price \$2.50 (\$3.50 in Canada, £1.95 in U.K.). Subscription price \$29.20 for 13 issues in the U.S., \$39.60 in remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. All rights reserved. **FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES AND RATES:** (215) 643-6385. U.S. and Canadian distribution by Cable News Inc., 11 West 42nd St., New York, NY 10036. International distribution by Worldwide Media Service Inc., 115 East 23rd St., New York, NY 10010. U.K. distribution by Comag, Tavistock Rd., West Drayton, Middlesex UB77QE, England.

Printed in U.S.A.

So far, Jim Cornette has been unable to manage Big Van Vader to a title in the WWF. Reader David Miller thinks Cornette has lost his touch and suggests Vader dump him.

and so is Cornette's ability to produce champions. If Vader plans on staying with Jim Cornette, he should look at the current successes of Bobby Eaton, Stan Lane, and Jim Del Ray, then seriously rethink his future.

DAVID MILLER
San Antonio, TX

STOP SULKING!

It's such a shame that a great wrestler and role model has decided to throw temper tantrums at such a bad time. After Hulk Hogan turned his back on the fans, everyone thought Sting would be the great leader who would get rid of the NWO, but instead, Sting is sulking and throwing temper tantrums. First, he doesn't even show up for *WCW Monday Nitro* for several weeks, then when he finally does show up, he doesn't wrestle and

instead drags Lex Luger out of his match.

If Sting is going to act up over what happened to him, then we shouldn't beg him to come back. If he can't deal with his own problems, how is he going to rid WCW of the NWO? Sting needs to realize that life is not always fair, but you just have to deal with it. If Sting is upset that Luger doubted his loyalty, then he should just stop being friends with Luger. Is it worth it to sacrifice everything he worked so long and hard for just because of a little frustration?

As for Sting's reaction to the NWO, he's doing just what they want him to do. They've been playing mind games with him, and the longer he rebels against WCW, the better it is for the NWO.

DONNA PERISIC
St. Petersburg, FL

(Continued on page 52)

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By Stu Saks

One of the more gratifying portions of Vince McMahon's live cyberspace appearance on America Online (which we have reprinted in the February 1997 issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*) was Vince's response to the question, "Will Hulk Hogan ever be inducted into the WWF Hall of Fame?"

Vince's response? "Yes."

That, of course, indicates that McMahon is willing to put his differences with Hogan aside to do the right thing. Which is good for McMahon, good for Hogan, and, most important of all, good for the WWF Hall of Fame. How, after all, could you have a WWF Hall of Fame without including the most prominent WWF champion in history? (You can't really fault the WWF for not inducting Bruno Sammartino, who held the heavyweight title a combined 11 years, because Bruno himself has publicly stated that he wants no part of McMahon or the WWF.)

It might hurt McMahon personally to include Hogan, but give the man credit for understanding the importance of strengthening the Hall's credibility. When a hall of fame is a only concept and not a building, credibility is really the only thing it has.

However, and this is a HUGE however ... What the heck was the WWF thinking about when it inducted Johnny Rodz into the Hall in November? Rodz is a nice man, and he is doing his part for the sport with his training center, The Unpredictable School of Pro Wrestling in Brooklyn, New York. But as a wrestler, Johnny Rodz wasn't within a thousand matches of being a .500 competitor. At least Baron Mikel Scicluna, who was also inducted in November, held the WWF's tag team title twice (with Smasher Sloan in 1966 and King Curtis in 1972).

Can you imagine the uproar if the baseball Hall of Fame inducted a .220 hitter who couldn't field? Longevity should be one of the criteria for Hall of Fame induction, but for the sake of the Hall's credibility, it can't be the only one.

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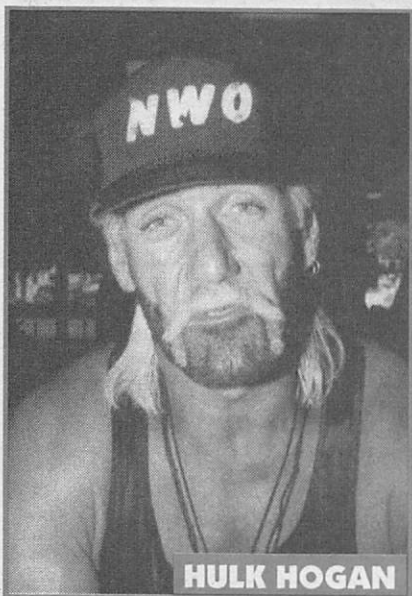
NAMES MA

ACCORDING TO **HULK HOGAN**, Roddy Piper showed up at Halloween Havoc "because he was ticked off at us for not returning his calls about joining the NWO. Brother, as soon as the NWO became the place to be, Piper would leave messages five, maybe six times a day, begging us to let him join."

Laughing hysterically, **Ted DiBiase** added, "No, Hulk, it was more like 10 or 11 calls an hour! We don't need that old geezer. If he's up for shining our boots, maybe we can put him on the payroll. Other than that, we have no need for any guy who wears a skirt!"

Piper was furious when I called him and told him what the NWO had said.

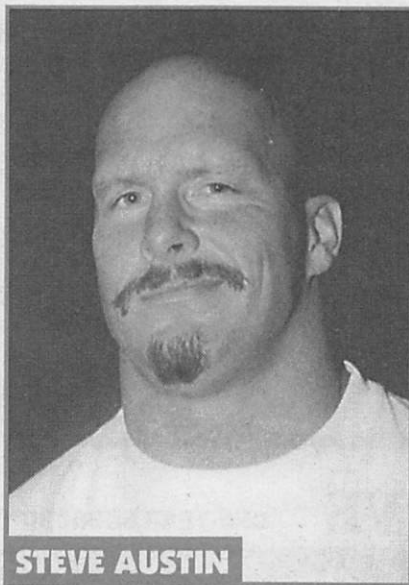
"That's a load of crap!" he said. "Yeah, I called Hogan maybe a dozen times to tell him if he doesn't stop this NWO stuff, I'll stop it for



HULK HOGAN

him! It's all over for the NWO now! 'Hot Rod' rules. Hulk Hogan, I can't wait to get my hands on you! Your biggest nightmare is back—me!"

Everyone thought that **Steve Austin** cherished his friendship with **Brian Pillman**. The two men used to wrestle together as **The Hollywood Blonds** in WCW, and although they eventually feuded there, they had grown close since both arrived in the WWF ... or so we thought. After watching Austin sneak-attack Pillman twice (once in the ring, once inside Pillman's home), I tried to find



STEVE AUSTIN

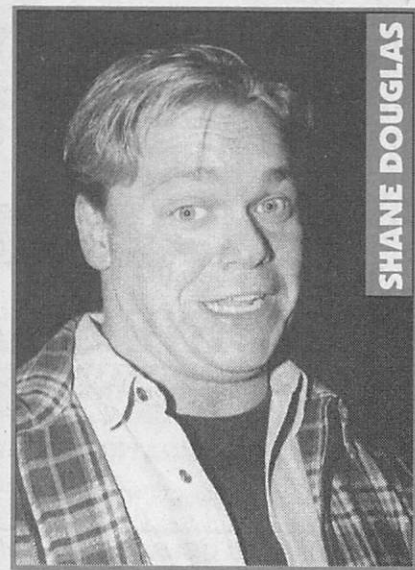
out where the friendship went bad.

"Apter, 'Stone-Cold' is a psycho, a mental case," Austin said. "A person could be my best friend today, but tomorrow I might want to cripple him. Yeah, I get satisfaction out of the sheer terror of planning an attack. When someone thinks they're safe with you and then you jump them—yeah, it's real cool. The friendship ended for no particular reason. I just felt the urge to screw up his life again, that's all."

Barry Windham is no longer wearing war paint or calling himself **The Stalker**. "After taking a few years off, I didn't think people wanted to see Barry Windham again," he

said, "so I changed my persona. The public took to me like I never thought they would again, so off with the paint. I'm just plain Barry Windham again." By the way, have you noticed how much Barry now resembles his dad, **Blackjack Mulligan**? "I'm proud that I look like my dad," he added. "He was one of the greats of our sport. The WWF should induct him into the Hall of Fame."

Mulligan, who played pro football for the New York Jets under the name Bob Windham prior to his wrestling career, was a co-holder of the WWF tag team championship with **Blackjack Lanza** in 1975.



SHANE DOUGLAS

We all know that **Shane Douglas** is proud of the fact that he broke **Pit Bull I's** neck and apparently ended his career, but I wanted to find out why he has become so sadistic in the last few months. He gave me an interesting answer.

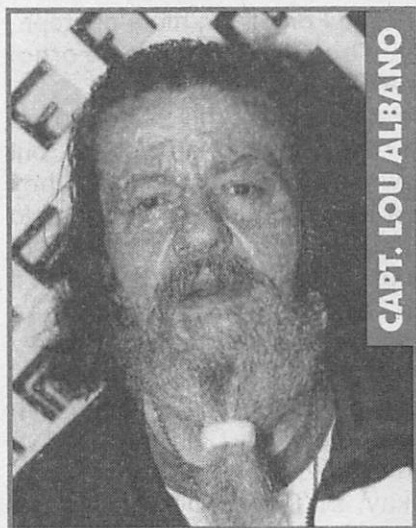
"With **Francine** at my side, I feel more violent than I ever did," he said. "I have a passion to hurt and cripple. Maybe it's a male ego thing. I'm just trying to show off for a great lady. I look back on the days when I

KIN' NEWS

By Bill Apter

teamed with **Ricky Steamboat** and other people who wrestle just for the sport of it, and I can't believe what a wimp I was."

After being out for several months with a severe neck injury, **Ray Odyssey** has returned to action in Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling. He beat **Crush** on a PCW card in November ... Also in PCW, **Capt. Lou Albano** had his Sicilian stretch-



CAPT. LOU ALBANO

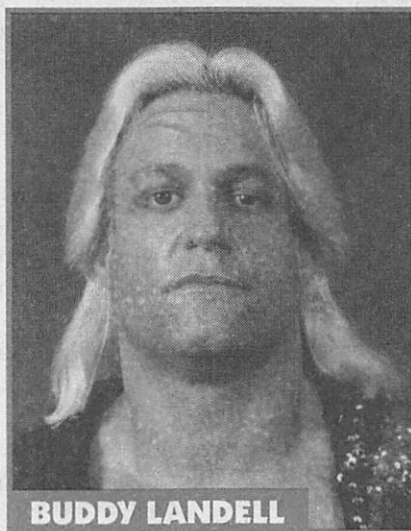
er match with **Judd The Stud**, a young rulebreaking manager. After Albano evaded several swings of a chair from Judd, both of them wound up in a corner, where Judd tried once again to hit Lou with the chair. The Captain ducked, and the chair rebounded off the turnbuckle, hitting Judd in the head.

Judd then dropped the chair, and Albano took it in hand, smashed him with it, and pinned him. The crowd went wild as Albano's arm was raised in victory and Judd was taken out on the stretcher!

"**Mr. Perfect**" **Curt Hennig** told me that WWF World champion **Shawn Michaels** should be grateful his comeback attempt has been delayed. "Shawn breathed a sigh of

relief when he realized I was not going to be making an official comeback just yet," Mr. Perfect said. "Now Michaels says he has no fear of **Hunter Hearst Helmsley**, that he's just another challenger. Michaels, remember who is coaching him. You might be wrestling Hunter physically, but mentally, it's me in there" ... **Buddy Landell**, who has recovered from knee surgery, is wrestling again and feuding with **Killer Kyle** in several Tennessee independents ... **Derek Domino** is the new All-Star Wrestling heavyweight champion, having beaten **Reckless Youth** for the gold ... **The Great Bolo** is still trying to win the World Wrestling Empire title from **Chief Red Eagle**.

A major promotional war has heated up in Mexico, where some of AAA's biggest stars—**Konnor**, **Rey Misterio Jr.**, **Super Calo**, and several others—have broken away from



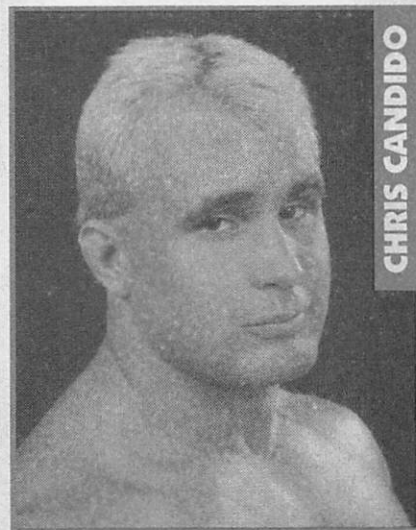
BUDDY LANDELL

the group and joined a new organization, **PROMO Azteca**. The promotion will feature a lot of ECW-style wrestling ... **Dan Severn** is back on U.S. soil after a successful Ultimate Fight-style match against **Mario Netto** in Brazil ... I'm told

Superstar Billy Graham is doing well after recently undergoing hip surgery.

Bob Orton Jr. has won the American Wrestling Federation heavyweight belt from **Tito Santana**. "Bob Orton is a great competitor," Santana said, "but both **Sheik Adnan-Al Kaissie** and **Mr. Fuji** interfered on his behalf. It was three against one. There's no way I could have kept my title!"

Sunny was spotted wearing dark



CHRIS CANDIDO

glasses and scouting a **Chris Candido** match at an ECW card a few months back. Talk is that the two might soon get back together again. I'm wondering if Sunny will accompany him to the ring in ECW ... Yes, that's **2 Cold Scorpio** appearing in the WWF as **Flash Funk**. "The name fits me fine," he said. "I'm flashy and I'm funky." But why the name change? "The WWF suggested it, and why put up a battle?" he explained. "I'm getting paid to wrestle there, so I don't care what they call me, as long as I can cash those checks!"

That's all for now. I'll see you at the matches! □

FOR STARTERS, LET'S review my itinerary from the past few months. Last month, I went roaming the streets of Memphis searching for Jerry Lawler so that he could comment on his shocking loss to The Colorado Kid. Two months ago, I went shopping in Manhattan with Miss Patricia. Four months ago, I was nearly choked down by the overpowering smell of Col. Robert Parker's cigar smoke.

If it sounds like I should be on disability, you're right.

But ... wait. A decent assignment this month? One that won't be painful to carry out?

"Why don't you go to Middletown, New York," Stu Saks suggested. "Check out the ECW card they're

ON THE ROAD

With Dave Lenker

came up with this was obviously trying to discourage people from driving in New Jersey.

Finally, after getting off the Garden State at the New York State Thruway, hopping onto Route 17, and getting off at the Middletown exit, I drove into The City That Time Forgot. Or, more appropriately, The City That Time Forgot With A Mall Inside.

Strange place, this Middletown, New York. They had an old mall, but that wasn't good enough, so they built a new mall right next to the old mall, and that ran the old mall out of business. One of these days, they'll build another mall, and then Middletown, New York, a city barely big enough to support one mall, will have two obsolete malls (along with some of the worst Chinese food I've ever tasted).

Okay, so I'm in Middletown and asking directions.

"Excuse me, sir," I ask a man sitting on the sidewalk (not on a bench, but on the sidewalk). "Can you tell me how to get to the Orange County Fairgrounds?"

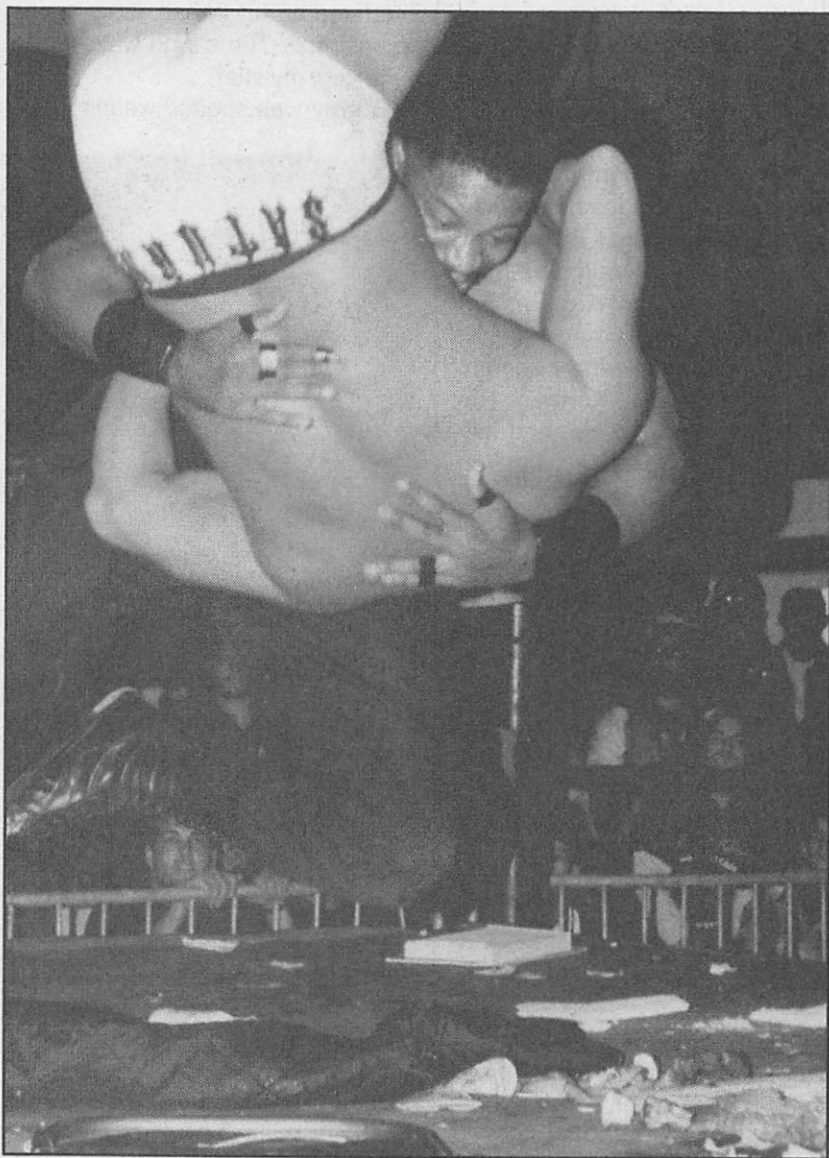
"Ain't no fair going on now, mister," the man said. "Fair was over in July."

"Well, I'm not looking for a fair. I'm looking for the Fairgrounds," I explained.

"Don't know why. Ain't nothing there but a lot of dirt."

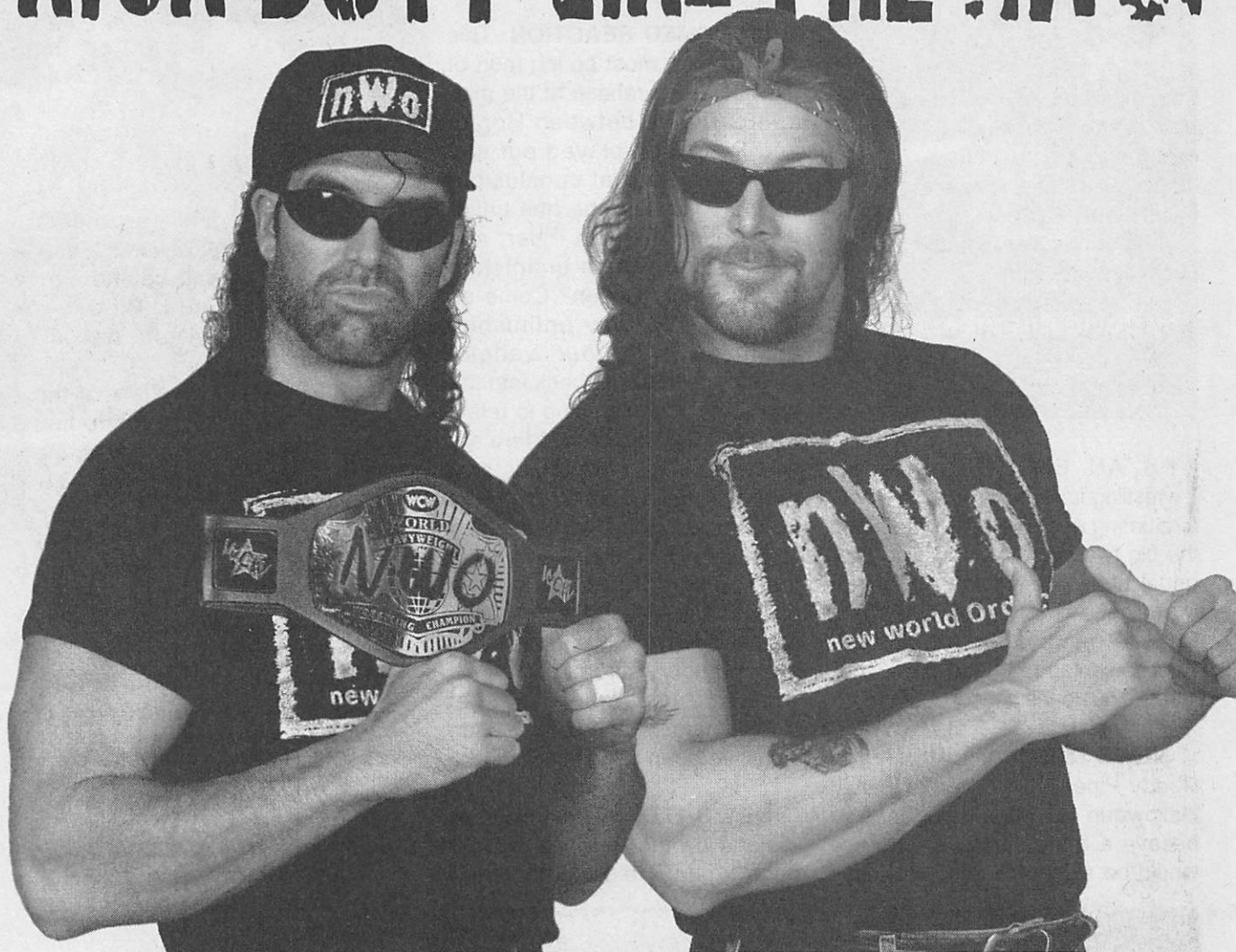
This was getting nowhere. Then the man pulled a bottle of Thunderbird out of his pocket, took a swig like it was water, and rolled into the gutter like it was the most com-

(Continued on page 54)



To get the true feel of a ECW matches like The Gangstas vs. The Eliminators, Dave Lenker learned, you really have to see at the federation's home base, the ECW Arena.

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Behind the Dressing Room Door

by David Rosenbaum

IT'S AN EXCITING time for wrestling fans, what with old-timers returning and making a splash and the big two federations fighting their usual boardroom battles. Sounds like a good time to play one of my favorite games: News Item, Gut Reaction, Informed Reaction.

Let's cut to the chase:

NEWS ITEM: Hulk Hogan and Roddy Piper have a verbal war at Halloween Havoc, leading fans to believe a match between the two would be signed. Hogan later says

Piper really wants to be part of the New World Order.

GUT REACTION: This could be the most boring feud of the decade.

INFORMED REACTION: This could be the most boring feud of the decade, a rehash of the mid-1980s rivalry between Hogan and Piper that played out and came to a logical conclusion. Now Hogan says he has unfinished business with Piper, and Piper says he has unfinished business with Hogan? Come off it, guys! The only unfinished business is in your wallets. Piper's trying to get back into the spotlight. Hogan's trying to retain his spot. Unfortunately, there are a lot of fine young wrestlers (such as Eddy Guerrero, Rey Mysterio, Jr., and Dean Malenko) out there who'd like their turn in the spotlight, but keep getting pushed aside by these guys who refuse to leave. My suggestion is a mandatory retirement age for wrestlers: one year after I get sick of them. In that case, Hogan would've been gone in 1985.

NEWS ITEM: "Psycho" Sid Vicious on the verge of stardom once again. He's still looking to



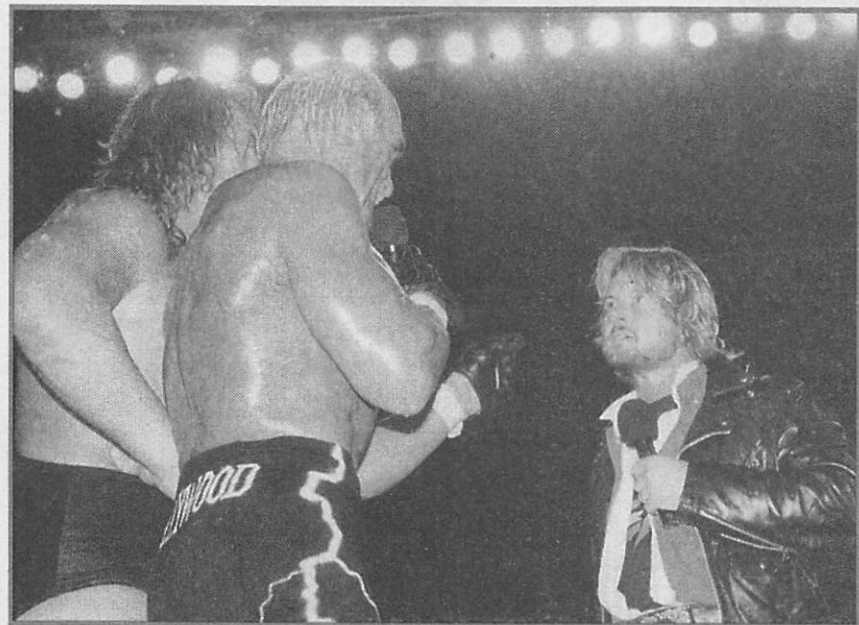
All one has to do is look into the eyes of Sid Vicious to know that he is ready to make a serious run at a title in the WWF. Rosenbaum, whose been critical of Sid in the past, predicts a big '97 for the big man.

win his first title in either the WWF or WCW. Shawn Michaels, the WWF World champion, is again his target.

GUT REACTION: Sid's a loser, and he'll always be a loser, but maybe this time he has an outside shot.

INFORMED REACTION: Michaels is looking worn down. Sid, realizing his place in history is as a guy who never fulfilled his potential, wants to change his reputation. It's been said that the person with the most to gain usually wins. In this case, Sid has the most to gain, while Michaels has been embroiled in bitter feuds with Vader and Goldust, and now has to worry about Bret Hart again. As for Sid, he's fairly well-rested, in great physical shape, and he seems to have learned from his mistakes. But let's face it: Do we

(Continued on page 56)



Hulk Hogan, backed by The Giant, jaws with Roddy Piper at Halloween Havoc. Dave Rosenbaum isn't exactly thrilled that this 10-year-old war has been renewed.

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The incredible 100-page super-spectacular year-end collector's edition of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* is cover-dated March 1997 and goes on sale December 31, 1996. It's sure to be a newsstand sellout, so get yours early!

the Insider

by Brandi Mankiewicz

(The opinions expressed in "The Insider" are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)

YOU'LL NOTICE THE new shingle on the door. That's right, Ellner's out, and Brandi's in. For those of you who have a problem with a woman taking over the rulebreaking column

department, get over it and fast. I'm not going anywhere. If you thought Ellner was acerbic and a pain-in-the-rear, you had best bow down and show respect for Queen Brandi, Her Royal Highness for Gluteus Maximus Irritation. Every man's dream and every woman's nightmare. So without further ado, I open my palace of opinions for you to enjoy and agree with.

As a wrestling journalist, I get asked many questions, but a majority of inquiries are just plain redundant. Some questions have popped up in various conversations with co-workers and fans. Allow me to devote my first "Insider" to answer them in my own brilliant way.

When I'm on American Online, communicating with you poor, lonely souls, you all want to know one thing ...

"What do you look like?"

What difference does that make? If I weighed 300 pounds and had greasy black hair, would that deter you from filling my e-mail box with annoying inquiries and obscene propositions. Let's just say that I look as good as I write. And I write very well. Now you boys need to find a real girlfriend, not something that requires an air compressor. And you girls need to stop wishing you were like me and get a beer for Bubba.

"What's it like being one of only two females on staff?"

First of all, Liz Hunter is never around the office, and I'm glad for that. She's too busy *allegedly* traveling around the country. If you ask me, she's searching for the fountain of youth. And Lord knows she needs it. If Oil of Olay was meant to be taken internally, Liz would carry a flask of the stuff at all times. Everyone else is okay. But if Lenker puts me in charge of the "PWI 500" one more time ...

And speaking of the "500" ...

"How do you respond to complaints about the "PWI 500"?"

Walk a mile in my shoes and, maybe you'll comprehend the enor-

(Continued on page 58)



Eastern independent wrestler Mr. Ooh La La made his opinions about this year's "PWI 500" very clear to me. Guess what—he didn't make it. Sorry, pal, but I'm not going to be losing any sleep over it.

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ON Assignment

By Liz Hunter

I USUALLY HATE to write about the ancillary elements in wrestling. But lately they have received too much of the spotlight. Rulebreaking promoters, ex-promoters, referees, and ex-referees are out of control. Frankly, I'm getting sick of it all, and I don't like to give these people a forum.

But the story of Nick Patrick is forcing me to bend that rule.

I have been watching with growing curiosity the evolving tale of the referee allegedly going bad. Questions and suspicions continue. Is Nick Patrick on the NWO's payroll? Are his bizarre antics and even more bizarre decisions controlled by Ted DiBiase and Hulk Hogan? I decided to find out on my own.

I knew Bill Apter would be covering the main issues revolving around Halloween Havoc, so I decided to pursue the Patrick sideshow. I was determined to either confront him and force him to admit his guilt or give him a platform for his story. But my search was not going anywhere. Nick Patrick was either missing or avoiding me.

After exploring the catacombs of the MGM Grand Arena in Las Vegas, I found myself in a secluded area of the building. I looked around for a direction in which to walk or an exit sign. There it was. Right in front of me: a logo. I investigated further. *Oh my, I thought, I'm in front of the NWO locker room door.*

My first reaction was to leave the way I came in. But I heard a conversation going on just around a corner. I peered around that corner and saw Nick Patrick ... and Vincent, the former Virgil.

I was tempted to listen in, but that wouldn't be the ethical thing to do.

So I turned the corner and they saw me. Vincent immediately

motioned for me to get out of there, but fortunately this was one of those rare occasions in which I had a camera with me. I snapped a few shots before Vincent stormed off and slipped into the NWO locker room.

"Hunter, I heard you were looking for me, but what are you doing here?" said Patrick. "I was just letting Vincent know that I will tolerate no interference from the NWO today. This area is off-limits to the press. You should know that."

"And how do you know that, Nick?" I queried. "Unless you're under orders from Hogan."

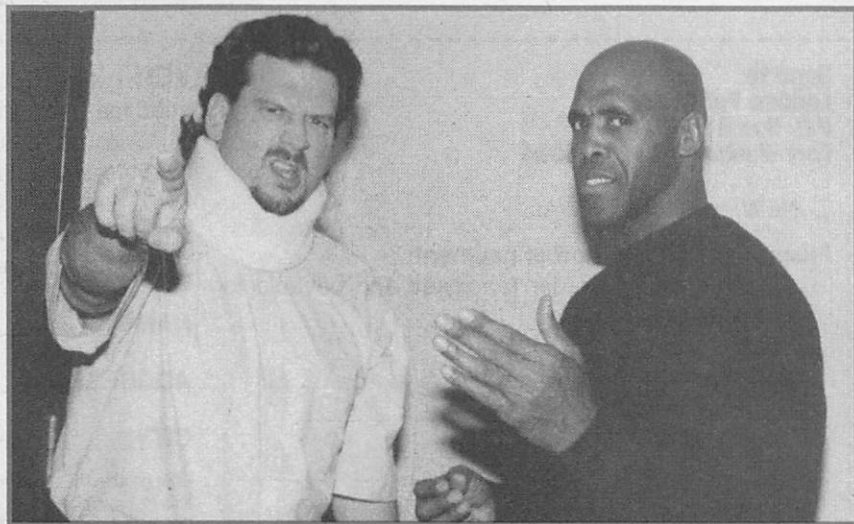
"Don't start this with me, Liz," said Patrick. "I've put up with enough abuse from the media to last a lifetime. I even went one-on-one with Randy Anderson for you guys (see page 50)."

"But you're here," I protested, "right outside the NWO locker room!"

"So are you," he responded. "Are
(Continued on page 59)



Nick Patrick and Vincent, head of NWO security, appeared to be having a pleasant conversation just a few hours before Halloween Havoc (above), but when Liz Hunter saw them, Patrick insisted he was issuing a warning to Vincent (below).



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MARCH 1993 WRESTLER features a full-color 12-page section, "1992: The Year In Pictures," that details all the most important events, both in and out of the ring, of that remarkable year in the mat sport.

MARCH 1994 WRESTLER features the full-color 12-page section, "1993: The Year In Pictures," detailing all the most important happenings, both in and out of the ring, of those notable 12 months in the mat sport.

JUNE 1994 WRESTLER is an 88-page spectacular featuring 20 pages of "The stuff all fans should know"—the best wrestling quiz ever! What's your wrestling IQ? Find out with this issue! Features four full-color pinups!

SEPTEMBER 1994 WRESTLER packs 88 pages of excitement into one big package—including the lively and candid "WWF Midyear Report," a comprehensive review of the WWF through the first half of the year! Includes four color pinups!

WINTER 1994 WRESTLER includes the must-read bonus section, "Wrestling From A To Z"—an alphabetical array of wrestling trends and turmoil! Four full-color pinups complete this sensational 88-page package!

MARCH 1995 WRESTLER looks back at 1994 with a spectacular 23-page section, "1994: The Year In Pictures," that includes four color pages highlighting the most important events of the year.

JUNE 1995 WRESTLER is 88-pages full of information, including an 18-page "Book Of Lists" section featuring the hottest lists in wrestling and full-color pages of Jeff Jarrett, Hulk Hogan, Sid Vicious, and Sabu.

DECEMBER 1995 WRESTLER lays down the law in a special 20-page rulebook developed by the editors. This section includes four color pinups depicting flagrant rules violations.

MARCH 1996 WRESTLER is an 88-page edition including the most memorable, the violent, and the bizarre moments from 1995 in a special "Year In Pictures" section, with four full-color pages featuring major issue from the year.

JANUARY 1994 INSIDE WRESTLING offers the most extensive coverage of SummerSlam '93 and Fall Brawl anywhere: seven pages of analysis plus two pages of full-color highlights from each card!

APRIL 1994 INSIDE WRESTLING includes the first-ever Inside Wrestling computer tournament! You won't believe who wins—or how! This 88-page issue's four-page color section includes an action centerfold—from the tournament!

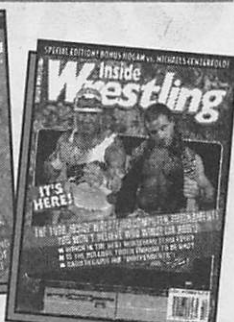
JULY 1994 INSIDE WRESTLING includes 21 pages of one-of-a-kind prognostications as Inside Wrestling looks into the sport's future and reports back to you! Coverage in this 88-page issue includes a four-page pinup section!

OCTOBER 1994 INSIDE WRESTLING presents the bold and brassy "WCW Midyear Report," a 15-page overview of the first half of 1994. Four full-color pinups fill out this 88-page special edition.

APRIL 1995 INSIDE WRESTLING features the second-annual Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament, including an action centerfold from the final match—is this for real?! Our computer seems to think so! You won't believe who wins!



JUNE 1995



APRIL 1996

JULY 1995 INSIDE WRESTLING is a power-packed 88-pager (including four color pinups) that included our popular "Wrestling Cool" section. Who's the coolest dude, babe, cripple, and daredevil? One thing all our readers agreed on: This issue was cool!

OCTOBER 1995 INSIDE WRESTLING reports on the state of affairs of World Championship Wrestling for the first half of 1995 in "WCW Midyear Report." We tell you how the stars fared among the turmoil in this special 88-page edition that includes four full-color pinups.

WINTER 1995 INSIDE WRESTLING gives you the birthdays of more than 180 of the hottest wrestlers in the sport today in a special pullout calendar and datebook. This book also features great historical information for each month!

APRIL 1996 INSIDE WRESTLING presents the third edition of the Inside Wrestling Computer Tournament, and the results just get more startling each year! The highlight of this annual 88-page special, as our readers have told us, is the computer-generated centerfold action shot from the tournament final.

JULY 1996 INSIDE WRESTLING takes you away from the wrestling ring and into the personal lives of wrestling's hottest stars. What makes Sunny cry? What's Sabu's favorite TV show? What's the dumbest thing Shawn Michaels has ever done? What scares Jim Cornette? What brings Sting down? This 88-pager includes color shots of Sting, Sunny, Sabu, and Michaels.

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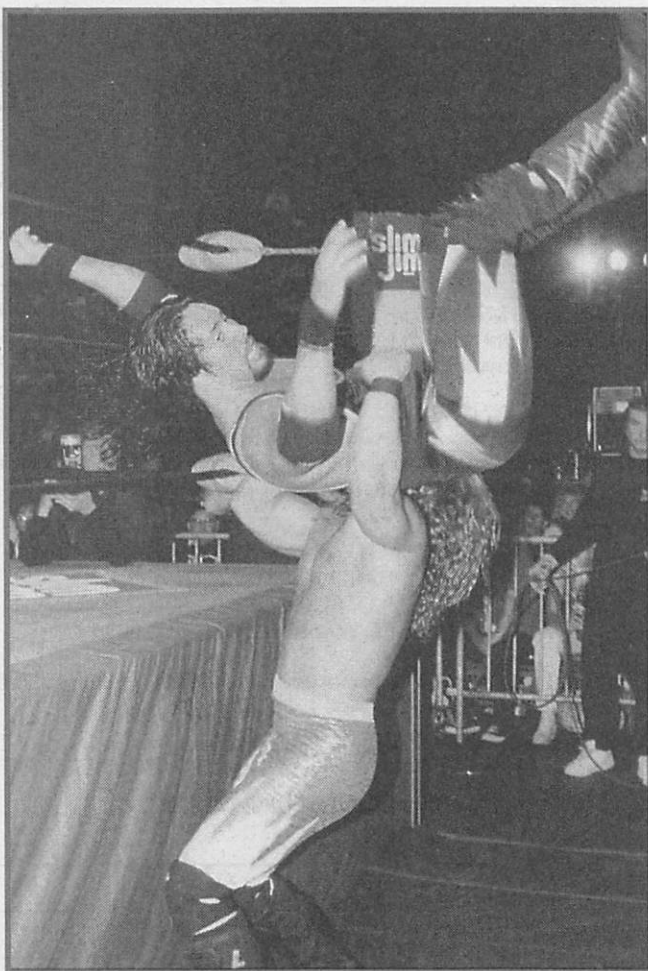
INSIDE WRESTLING CAPSULE PROFILE ²⁵⁰

SIX

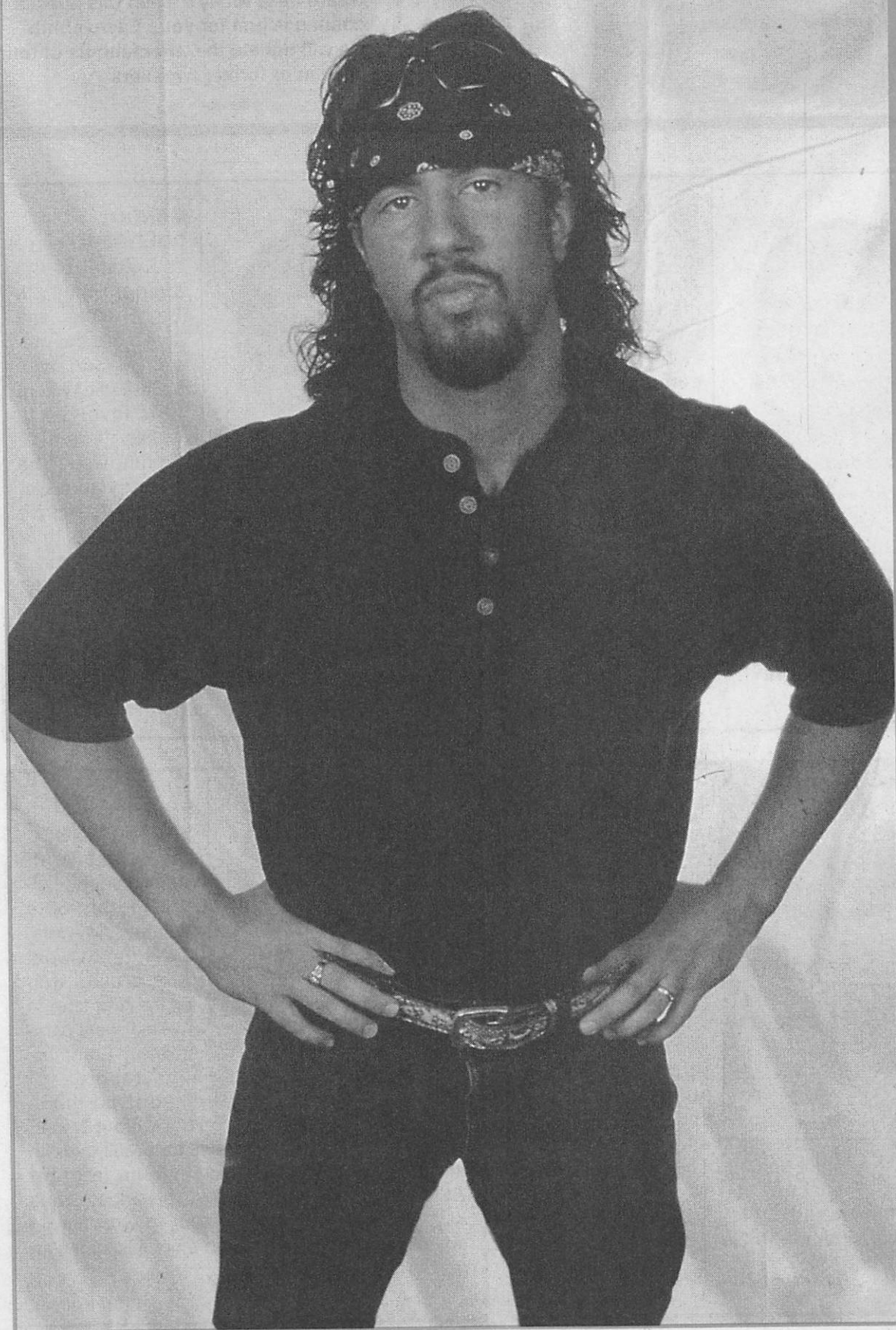
WHO WOULD HAVE ever thought that the shy, humble youngster who showed up in the WWF in the spring of 1993 just trying to see what he could accomplish would be part of one of the most powerful cliques in wrestling history less than four years later? That's right, the former 1-2-3 Kid is now NWO through and through, and he has his eyes on the WCW cruiserweight belt currently held by Dean Malenko (*"That'll be the NWO cruiserweight belt soon enough!"*) ... This 6'2", 212-pound Minneapolis native got his start in Minnesota's PWA seven years ago and won several titles there ... Also won Texas' Global junior heavyweight title twice in '91 before venturing to Japan to battle stars such as Jushin Liger, El Samurai, Ultimo Dragon, and The Great Muta (*"Some real competition"*) ... Struggled in his first few WWF matches in '93 before pulling off a colossal upset on *Monday Night Raw* against Scott "Razor Ramon" Hall (*"Earned his respect right there and then"*) ... Started an impressive winning streak with victories over Ted DiBiase, Terry Taylor, and Rick Martel ... Struggled, however, in later matches with Bastion Booger, Irwin R. Schyster, and Shawn

Michaels ... Won his first WWF title in January 1994 when he and Marty Jannetty upset The Quebecers for the WWF tag title, but they lost the belts back a week later (*"Guess who carried that team"*) ... Upset Jeff Jarrett in the quarterfinals of the 1994 King of the Ring tournament before losing to Owen Hart in the semifinals ... Nearly beat then-WWF champ Bret Hart in July 1994 ... Struggled through the second half of '94, then began teaming with Aldo Montoya and Bob Holly (*"Both lightweights in*

every sense of the word") ... He and Holly won the WWF tag title at the '95 Royal Rumble, but lost it one night later to The Smokin' Gunns ... Helped Ramon in his feud with Jarrett and The Roadie after WrestleMania XI, then suffered a serious neck injury at the hands of the two rulebreakers (*"Never thought much of Jarrett"*) ... Lost several matches to Roadie and Hakushi ... Teamed with Ramon against the Gunns at In Your House IV, and Ramon dominated the match. They lost when Kid insisted on pinning Billy Gunn, but instead got pinned himself ... Became a rulebreaker when, as guest referee of a Ramon-Sid match, he made a fast count on Ramon and accepted a payoff from DiBiase, Sid's manager (*"Hey, money talks"*) ... Joined DiBiase's Million-Dollar Corporation and had limited success in tag matches with Sid ... Also had a hard time beating Ramon in their subsequent feud (*"That's all history now. Who cares?"*) ... Eventually disappeared from the WWF and showed up in WCW this fall, where he became a member of the NWO (*"The greatest collection of talent ever assembled"*) ... Is faring well in a series of matches with fellow high-flyer Chris Jericho. Look for him to challenge Malenko soon. □



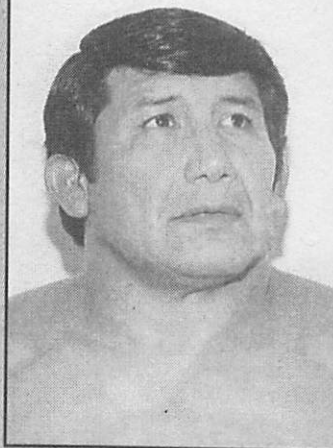
Six leaps over the top rope and onto Chris Jericho during their match at Halloween Havoc '96. The former 1-2-3 Kid is confident that he will soon win the WCW cruiserweight title for the NWO.



XIS

Where Are They NOW

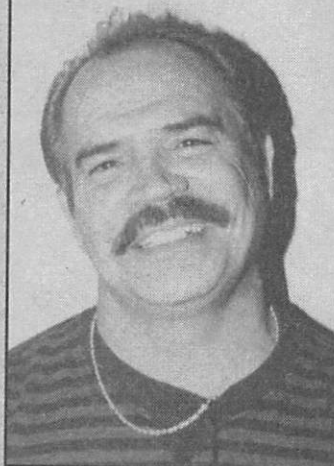
Do you have a favorite wrestler who has left your area? Are you wondering where he is today? Then this special column is just for you. Each month we will update the whereabouts of four current or former wrestlers



RAY MENDOZA

Once one of Mexico's most popular athletes, Mendoza made a name for himself in the U.S. in the '70s when he competed in Los Angeles. An excellent singles and tag team wrestler, Ray is remembered for his exciting feud with Cyclone Negro and for the tag

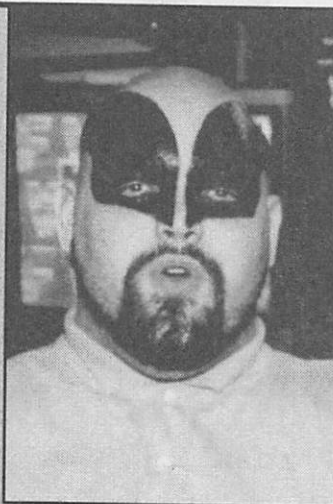
teams he formed with Raul Reyes and Mil Mascaras. Today, Ray's love for the sport is still evident, as he is living in Mexico and working as one of the top executives with the Mexican Wrestling Commission.



MANDO GUERRERO

The eldest of the Guerrero brothers (Eddy, Hector, and Chavo are the others), Mando lives in California, where he is involved in movies. "I do a lot of stunt work," he recently told us. "I've met lots of big stars, and I love this kind of work."

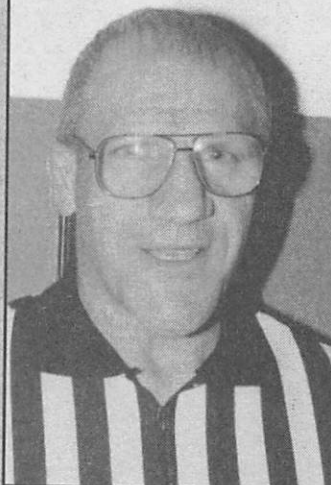
Mando is also an "unofficial" adviser to Eddy. "Sometimes my movie work takes me to a town where he's wrestling, and I drop in and give him advice, whether he wants it or not!" he said. "Remember, I'm the big brother!"



MANTAUUR

The beastly former WWF mid-carder, also known as Bruiser Mastino to ECW fans, has left the United States and is currently on tour in Austria and Germany. "I'm after Rambo's CWA title," he said. "I'm a big star over here because they've never seen anyone with

so much raw talent come in and beat their guys so easily. When I get that title shot, I'll come back to the United States with the gold, and they'll hold a parade in New York for me, their hero!"



BRUNO SAMMARTINO

The all-time WWF great recently celebrated his 60th birthday. "My wife, Carol, and I went on a cruise, and for the first time in my life, I went parasailing," Sammartino reports. "I liked it so much that I did it twice!" Bruno still lives in

suburban Pittsburgh and remains in great shape. "I work out every day," he adds. Bruno says he has no plans to return to wrestling in any capacity, although he did enjoy his stint as a guest referee in WCW last summer.

BACK ISSUES OF

Inside Wrestling

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November 1984/Stories include: Rhodes, Rich, Hernandez, Warriors.

January 1987/Stories include: Rude-Flair, Piper, T.A., Taylor.

February 1987/Stories include: Hogan-Piper-Orndorff, Taylor, Flair.

April 1987/Stories include: Windham, Steamboat, Ellering, Duggan.

December 1987/Stories include: Freebirds, Rhodes, Magnum, Savage, Perez.

March 1988/Stories include: Bigelow, Adams, Koloff, Honky Tonk, Freebirds.

April 1988/Stories include: Luger-Flair, Warrior, Andre-Hogan-DiBiase.

June 1988/Stories include: Warriors, Savage, R&R Express, Baby Doll.

October 1988/Stories include: Megapowers-Megabucks, Horsemen, Lawler.

November 1988/Stories include: Rhodes, Kerry, Luger, Muraco, Freebirds.

December 1988/Stories include: Powers of Pain, Ultimate, Flair, Piper.

March 1989/Stories include: Hennig, Midnights, Fuller & Golden, Ultimate.

May 1989/Stories include: Hogan, Steiner, Morton, Bad Co., Taylor.

June 1989/Stories include: Hogan-Savage, Luger, Steamboat-Flair.

August 1989/Stories include: Hulkamania, Steamboat, Rude, Cornette.

September 1989/Stories include: Savage-Hogan, Luger, Mascaras, Rhodes.

October 1989/Stories include: Hall-Pillman-Vicious, Hennig, Warriors, Rhodes.

December 1989/Stories include: Rhodes, Flair, Hogan-Zeus, Embry.

January 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Sting-Flair, Roberts-DiBiase.

April 1990/Stories include: Starrcade '89, Ultimate, Rhodes, Sawyer.

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July 1990/Stories include: Steiners, Sting, Warrior & Hogan, Earthquake.

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September 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Duggan, JYD, Adams, Horsemen.

October 1990/Stories include: Sting, Legion of Doom, Bushwhackers, Gigante.

November 1990/Stories include: Flair, Hogan, Vicious, Slaughter, Orient.

December 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Sting, Kerry, Cornette, Zbyszko.

January 1991/Stories include: LOD, Adams, Steiners, Lawler-Funk.

February 1991/Stories include: Taylor, Hogan, Martel, Sting.

March 1991/Stories include: Hogan-Earthquake, Roberts-Martel, Sting.

April 1991/Stories include: Flair-Sting, Steiners, Piper, Zbyszko, Slaughter.

May 1991/Stories include: Savage-Warrior, Steiners, Sting, Virgil.

June 1991/Stories include: Steiners, LOD, Koloff, I-C belt, Dundees.

July 1991/Stories include: Hogan, Virgil, Nastys, Steiners, Spivey.

September 1991/Stories include: Justice-Hogan, Hyatt, Rude, Hennig.

October 1991/Stories include: Savage & Liz, Hogan & Warrior, Luger.

November 1991/Stories include: Hogan-Savage, Luger, Flair, War Games.

January 1992/Stories include: Sting, Freebirds, Hart, Rhodes, Rotundo.

May 1992/Stories include: Justice-Hogan, Liger, Gilbert, Repo Man.

June 1992/Stories include: Sting, Hogan, Race, Bagwell, Atlas.

August 1992/Stories include: Savage-Flair, Jack-Badd, Christopher, LOD.

September 1992/Stories include: War Games, Hogan, Vader, Kamala.

November 1992/Stories include: Flair, Warrior, Vader, top rope rule.

March 1993/Stories include: Michaels, Koloff, Windham-Rhodes.

June 1993/Stories include: Doink, Vader-Sting, Hart, Steiners, Lawler.

July 1993/Stories include: Bravo, Gonzales, Bulldog, Ramon, Arn.

August 1993/Stories include: Hogan-Yokozuna, Hart, Christopher.

September 1993/Stories include: Steiners, Slamboree, Ramon, Sting & Smith.

October 1993/Stories include: SummerSlam, Money Inc., Vader-Vicious.

November 1993/Stories include: Bodies, Jannetty, Rude-Flair, Hogan, Luger.

December 1993/Stories include: Fytc, Austin, Luger, Yokozuna, Sting & Flair.

February 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Duggan, Doinks, Blonds, holiday wishes.

March 1994/Stories include: Nastys, Parker, Borge, 1994 predictions.

May 1994/Stories include: Flair-Rude, Hart, Luger, Morton, Heenan.

June 1994/Stories include: Steamboat, Snuka, Anthony, Bruises, Blayze.

August 1994/Stories include: Piper, Hogan, 911, Freebirds, rulebreakers.

September 1994/Stories include: Nastys, Undertaker, Flair-Steamboat.

November 1994/Stories include: DiBiase, Sting, Diesel, Cactus-Sabu.

December 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Bret, Rottens, Cactus, AAA midgets.

January 1995/Stories include: Vader, Diesel & Razor, Hart, Luger, Sabu.

February 1995/Stories include: Sting, McMahon-Lawler, Woman, Brutus-Hogan.

March 1995/Stories include: Nastys, Ramon, Tasmaniac, 1995 predictions.

May 1995/Stories include: Michaels, Mabel, Diesel, Undertaker, Hogan.

June 1995/Stories include: Hogan-Savage, Austin, Gangstas, Public Enemy.

August 1995/Stories include: Badd, Bigelow, Studd, Bubba-Sting.

September 1995/Stories include: Vicious, Flair-Hogan, Severn, Mabel.

November 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Wright, Tatanka, Backlund-Clinton.

December 1995/Stories include: Undertaker, Vader, Renegade, Gangstas-PE.

January 1996/Stories include: Norton, Vicious, Psicosis-Misterio.

February 1996/Stories include: 1996 predictions, Goldust, Sherri-Parker.

April 1996/Stories include: Diesel, Kid, Savage-Sting-Luger-Hogan.

May 1996/Stories include: Austin, Public Enemy, Vader, Sasaki, weirdness.

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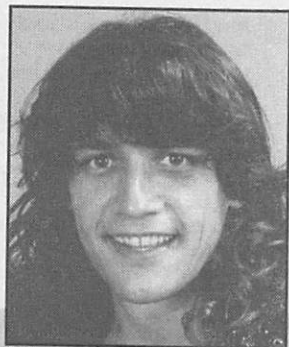
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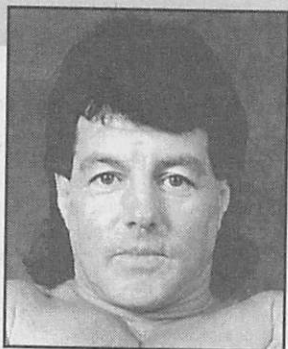


NEWS FROM THE

MEMPHIS, TN
BY MARK MITCHELL



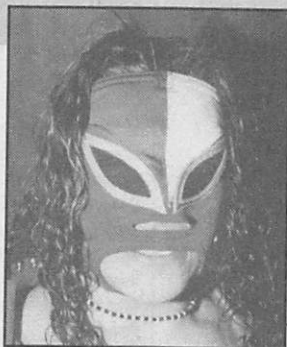
THE COLORADO KID
VS.
BILL DUNDEE



SAN JOSE, CA
BY ROB JOSHUA



PSICOSIS
VS.
JUVENTUD GUERRERA



PHILADELPHIA, PA
BY PAT JONES



TOMMY DREAMER
VS.
BRIAN LEE



USWA heavyweight champion Colorado Kid retained his title in this bout against Bill Dundee, but it was by no means easy. Dundee and Kid fought a very even match, with the young champ never backing down against his veteran challenger. Kid did make one crucial mistake, though, when he turned his back on Dundee, who nailed him with a chain while referee Bill Rush was distracted. Dundee pinned Kid to apparently win the title, but his celebration was cut short when ring-side fans told Rush what happened. He ultimately reversed the decision.

OTHER BOUTS: Tony Falk pinned Super Mario ... Sean Venom & Bart Sawyer defeated Mike Samples & Trailer Park Trash ... Brian Christopher & Wolfie D beat Bill & Jamie Dundee to win the USWA tag team title ... USWA heavyweight champ The Colorado Kid beat Sir Mo by forfeit ... USWA Southern champ Brian Christopher wrestled Wolfie D to a double-disqualification ... Flash Flanagan won a battle royal.

Both Psicosis and Guerrera showed off their high-flying skills in this WCW battle, and both got several near-falls early on. The bout featured plenty of "Frankensteiners," topes, and other Lucha-style moves, and neither man gained a clear-cut advantage for very long. The two men battled both in and out of the ring and displayed their uncanny quickness and incredible acrobatics. Finally, after the two Mexican stars used a series of spectacular moves and countermoves on each other, Guerrera was able to wrap up Psicosis for the pinfall.

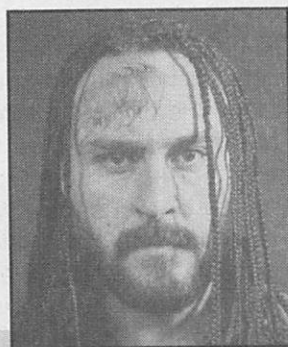
OTHER BOUTS: Arn Anderson & Chris Benoit beat Kevin Sullivan & Konnan by disqualification ... Six pinned Chavo Guerrero Jr. ... Madusa beat Lelani Kai ... Rey Misterio Jr. beat Dean Malenko ... Eddy Guerrero beat Damien 666 ... Lex Luger pinned Big Bubba ... Scott Hall & Kevin Nash beat Marcus Bagwell & Scotty Riggs ... Randy Savage beat The Giant by disqualification.

Dreamer hasn't had a lot of luck against Lee in specialty matches of late, but he was able to prevail against him in this scaffold match. The two rivals tore into each other early on, with Lee opening a huge gash on Dreamer's head. They battered each other with everything from a cookie sheet to a trash can. When the two climbed onto the scaffold, Lee tried to choke-slam Dreamer, but Dreamer grabbed on to a metal pipe to stop his fall. He then rocked Lee with a series of punches, sending him through some of the tables set up below and to the ground for the win.

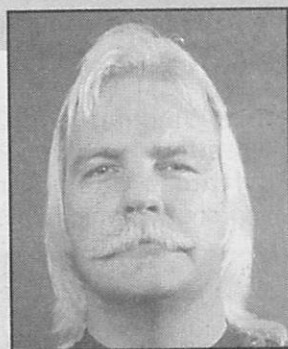
OTHER BOUTS: Hack Myers, Bubba Ray Dudley, & Davey Morton beat J.T. Smith, Axl Rotten, & D-Von Dudley ... Mikey Whipwreck beat Johnny Smith ... Taz defeated Little Guido ... Chris Candido beat Spike Dudley ... ECW TV champ Shane Douglas beat Cody Michaels ... ECW champ The Sandman beat 2 Cold Scorpio ... The Eliminators beat Steve Williams & Terry Gordy ... Sabu & Rob Van Dam beat Dan Kroffat & Doug Furnas.

WRESTLING CAPITALS

READING, PA
BY NICHOLAS KEMP



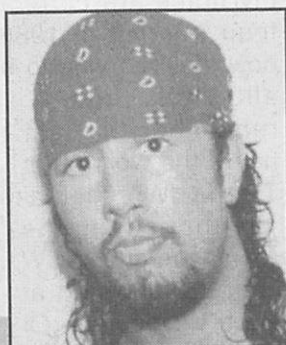
CRUSH
VS.
BARRY WINDHAM



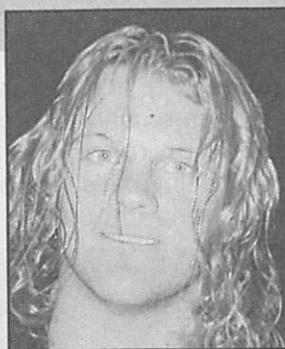
Windham reunited with Capt. Lou Albano, the man who led him and Mike Rotundo to the WWF tag title 11 years ago, for this PCW match. Crush, meanwhile, came to ringside with manager Judd the Stud. The two men exchanged suplexes early on. Crush then removed his belt and nailed Albano with it, dazing him. At that point, Judd distracted the referee, allowing Crush to wrap the belt around Windham's neck. Albano pointed this out to the referee, who called for the disqualification.

OTHER BOUTS: Troy Mest pinned Diablos Macabre ... The Cremator beat Mike Mayhem ... Glen Osbourne pinned Maxx Crimson ... Boogie Woogie Brown beat Mr. Ooh La La ... PCW tag team champs Romeo Catino & Boogie Woogie Brown beat Lance Diamond & Julio Sanchez ... Capt. Lou Albano beat Judd the Stud in a Sicilian stretcher match ... Freight Train Jones pinned PCW champ Mark Mest to win the title ... Cheetah Master pinned Ace Darling.

LAS VEGAS, NV
BY CATHI GILFERT



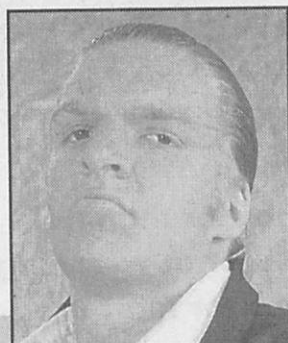
SIX
VS.
CHRIS JERICHO



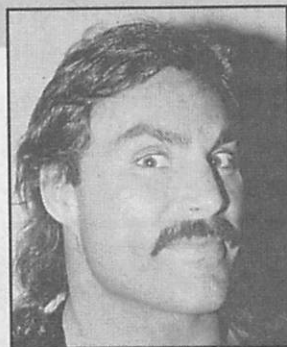
Controversial referee Nick Patrick literally decided the fate of this fast-paced Halloween Havoc match. Six and Jericho exchanged several high-risk moves, including top-roped dropkicks, splashes, and spinning kicks. Jericho apparently had Six pinned twice, but Patrick was slow to make the count and thus gave Six time to kick out. Six eventually retaliated, nailed Jericho with a sensational spinning kick, and pinned him as Patrick made a quick three-count.

OTHER BOUTS: Jim Powers pinned Pat Tanaka in a match not shown on the pay-per-view ... Dean Malenko pinned WCW cruiserweight champ Rey Mysterio Jr. to win the title ... Dallas Page pinned Eddy Guerrero ... Lex Luger beat Arn Anderson by submission to the "torture rack" ... Steve McMichael & Chris Benoit beat Meng & The Barbarian ... Kevin Nash & Scott Hall defeated WCW World tag team champs Harlem Heat to win the title ... World champion Hulk Hogan pinned Randy Savage.

CHICAGO, IL
BY CHARLIE KERWIN



HUNTER HEARST
HELMSLEY
VS.
MARC MERO



It's a good thing WWF Intercontinental champion Helmsley had "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig in his corner for this bout, because he definitely needed his help. Mero attacked Helmsley with a flurry of high-risk maneuvers early, but outside the ring, "Mr. Perfect" was busy leering at Sable, Mero's valet. Mero noticed this and pulled on "Perfect's" ponytail. Later in the match, while the referee was distracted, "Perfect" got revenge when he hit Mero with the I-C belt. Mero then became easy prey for Helmsley, who pinned him after executing his "pedigree."

OTHER BOUTS: Justin Bradshaw defeated Barry Horowitz ... Crush beat Bob Holly ... Steve Austin defeated Barry Windham ... The Grimm Twins beat The Smokin' Gunns ... WWF World champ Shawn Michaels defeated Big Van Vader ... The Sultan beat Aldo Montoya ... WWF World tag team champs Davey Boy Smith & Owen Hart beat Henry & Phineas Godwinn ... The Undertaker & "Psycho" Sid Vicious defeated Mankind & Goldust.



Matt Brock's **Plain** Speaking

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist.

Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor

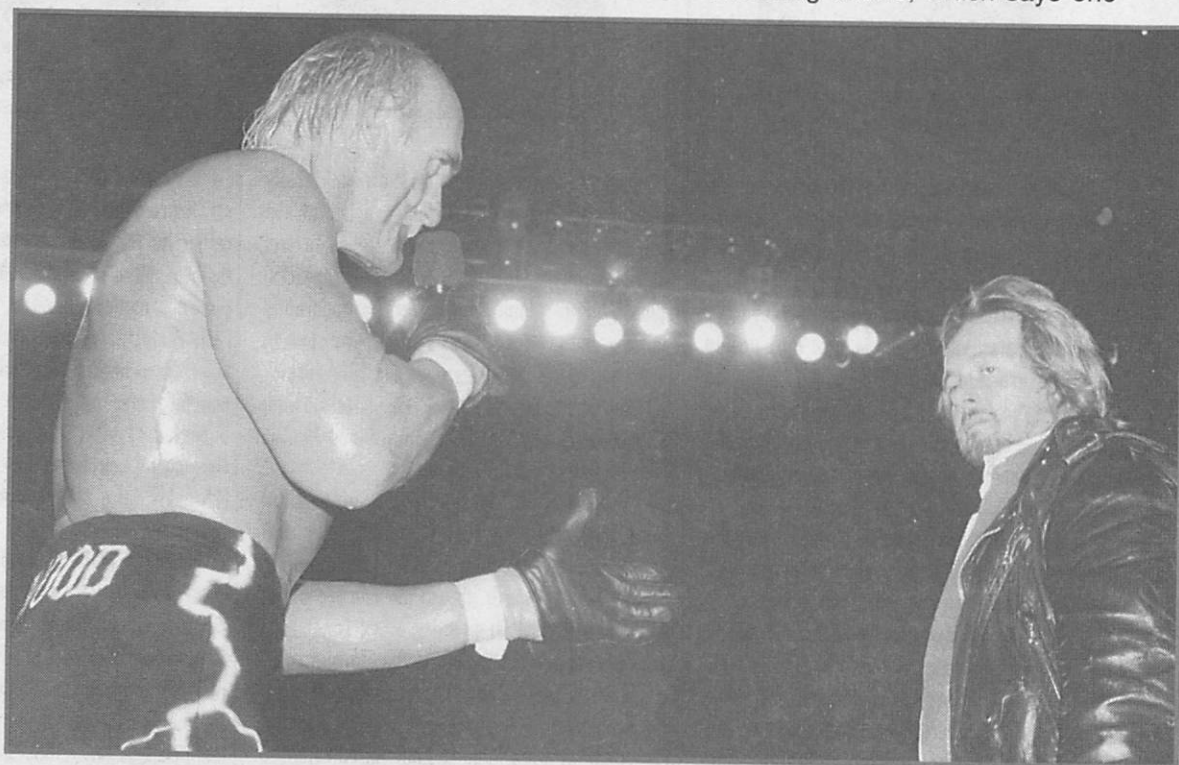
Great way to remain young, wrestling. Makes you feel about 10 years younger. Got any doubts about that? Then check out what's going on in WCW these days with Hulk Hogan and Roddy Piper. If my notes are correct, that feud was hot in 1986, and now they're trying to bring it all back again. Can't remember the last time I heard the words "Mr. T" and "WrestleMa-

nia" mentioned in the same sentence at a WCW card, but it happened at Halloween Havoc here. Of course, the question now is whether Piper unites with Hogan's New World Order or goes his own way and takes on that renegade organization. Hard to imagine this going any way but confrontational. The egos are too big, and Piper would never join an organization run by Hogan ... or run by anyone except himself. That's where people are missing the point. You're

talking about two men who think they were singlehandedly responsible for wrestling's boom in the mid-1980s, and there's no way of convincing them otherwise. Look at the two of them now. They get into the ring and start jawing at each other, each of them with a microphone in his hand, and they're barely listening when the other one is talking. No spotlight in the world is big enough for the both of them, and the New World Order is Hogan's organization, not Piper's. Hogan showed a few hints of giving in to Piper when he suggested they get together, but you can tell what he wants: He wants to control Piper, not join forces with him. That's the way it works with Hogan and Piper. This is all about control and two men trying to retain their place in history. Me, I feel 10 years younger. If history's any indication, I know exactly how this is going to turn out.

Barry Windham and Crush wrestled on two Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling shows, which says one

LAS VEGAS, NV



HULK & RODDY

of two things: Either Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling has come a long way, or Windham and Crush have fallen a long way. You make the call. Windham has taken on Capt. Lou Albano as his manager (Albano's been wrestling, too, against Judd the Stud in a series of Sicilian stretcher matches), while Crush tried to win the U.S. title from Ray Odyssey. It's good to have Windham and Crush back in the sport, even if they occasionally compete in a federation where not many people will see them, but you have to ask yourself, "Where are they going from here?" Are they sticking with the WWF? In any case, here's yet another example of two men who couldn't resist the pull of the ring. Sounds familiar.

READING, PA

What's with Eddie Ellner? Too big for his britches? Runs onto the field at Yankee Stadium, spreads his grandmother's ashes all over the field, gets splattered all over the news, then says goodbye to INSIDE WRESTLING? Can't figure this out, although it might have been a long time in coming. Ellner's been fighting a journalistic battle against fan favorites for a long time, but maybe they've got the best of him in the end. A few weeks ago he said to me, "The fans hate Hulk Hogan with such intensity. It's unbelievable. What am I supposed to do, support Hogan?" You can see where he might have been getting a little confused, but it would've been nice of him to stay on and work his way through the confusion, because his columns in these magazines are being taken over by Brandi Mankiewicz, otherwise known as my niece. As dark days go for wrestling jour-

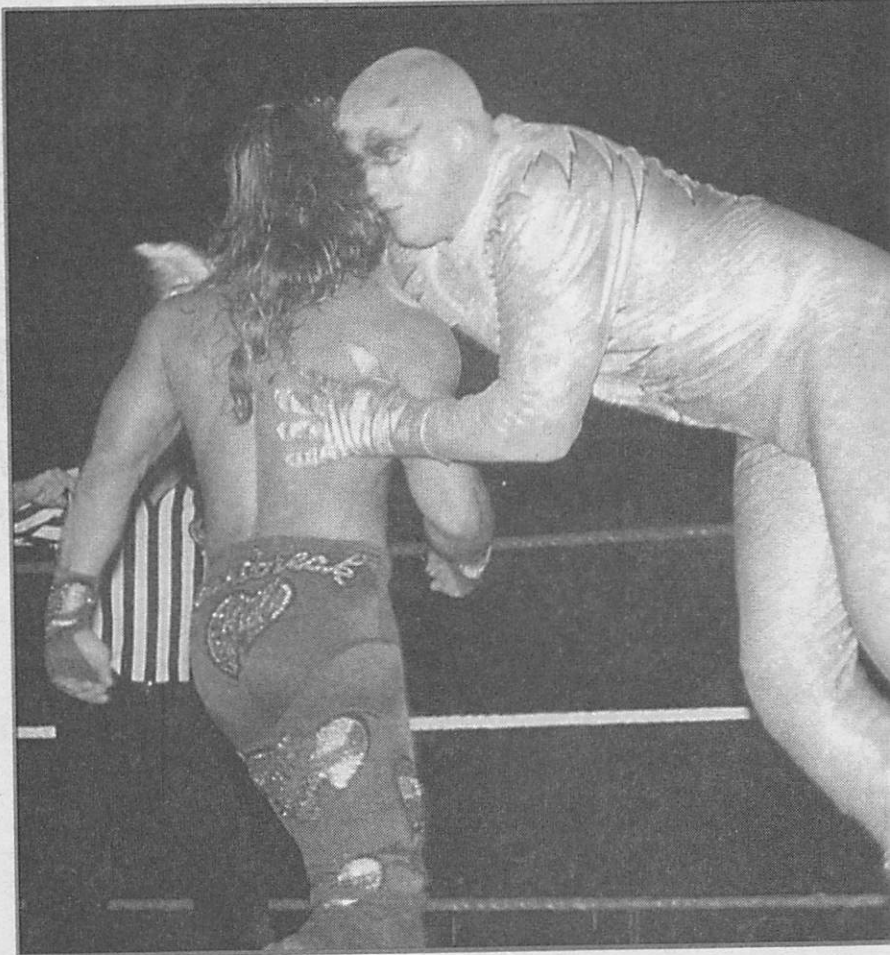
NEW YORK, NY

nalism, this might be the darkest of all. The last thing this sport needs is some know-it-all broad sashaying into a locker room with notebook and pen in hand and giving fan favorites the what-for. The way things look, the art of rulebreaker journalism has been dealt a major blow.

Shawn Michaels, The Undertaker, Goldust, and Mankind are battling like there's no tomorrow, and maybe there isn't. For Michaels, there's his feud with "Psycho" Sid Vicious, who for the first time in his career is acting and sounding like a winner. The Undertaker's trying to regain his killer instinct, while Mankind and Goldust are just struggling to stay in one piece. The four of them—Michaels and Undertaker vs. Goldust and Mankind—went at it

in a steel cage here, and what surprised everyone the most was how competitive Goldust and Mankind were. Lot of people thought they would have trouble walking out of the ring on their own. Not that Goldust didn't take a beating. Undertaker "tombstoned" him as hard as he's ever "tombstoned" anyone, which just about did it for this match on this night. It reminded me of one of those old-time steel cage matches, where there was absolutely no regard for anyone's well-being, and the combatants just tore into each other like it was a battle of life or death. You don't see that too often anymore, especially in the WWF, but then again, Michaels and Undertaker are battling for their careers. □

LANDOVER, MD

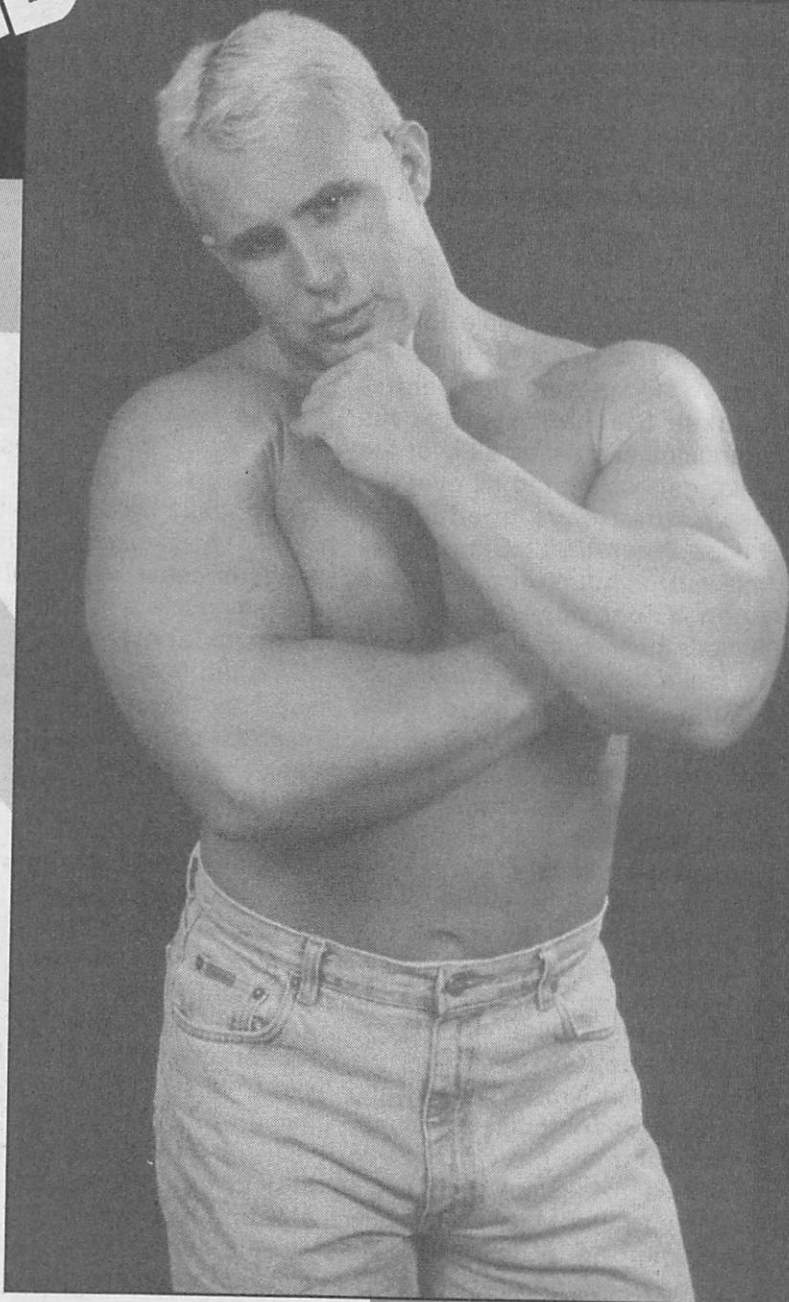


SHAWN vs. GOLDUST

“BODYDONNA” CHRIS CANDIDO:

Is he Skip or just Chris Candido? Does he long for a full-time reunion with Sunny or want to go on his own in the independents? These are confusing times for this former Bodydonna, but he thinks everything will turn out fine

HE'S LOST
DIRECTION,
BUT HE
KNOWS
WHERE HE'S
HEADED!





Chris "Skip" Candido is through wrestling stars such as Ahmed Johnson in the WWF. He will probably begin wrestling mostly singles again, but right now, nothing about his career is certain.

I was NWA champion, he told himself. I was a WWF tag team champion, he argued, trying to sell himself to himself. But if there was one thing Chris Candido didn't need, it was a sales job. He knew he was arguably the most underrated technical grappler in the WWF. Candido also knew that as a businessman, he was as lost as he was on this road, which seemed to lead to nowhere.

I'm not worried, he told himself. I always find my way.

His thoughts turned to Sunny, his confidante, friend, and manager for much of his six-year career; she managed him and Zip to that WWF tag team title. But Sunny, like all successful businesspeople, knew when to buy and sell her

By Bryan Ethier

CHRIS CANDIDO, A.K.A. Bodydonna Skip, unfolded the crumpled map on his lap and tried to determine where he was.

I think I know where I'm going, he reassured himself.

He'd been rambling down I-95 for two hours, headed toward southern Pennsylvania. He was searching for a town called Destiny, but he couldn't find it on his map.

That town called Destiny seemed to have vanished from his AAA map and personal reality.

He popped in *Kiss Alive III* and began tapping his fingers to "Detroit Rock City."

"You're gonna lose your mind in Detroit, Rock City" ... Candido hummed.

Have I lost a little bit of my mind, he wondered as he headed southwest to his future.

"Where *am* I going?" he muttered.

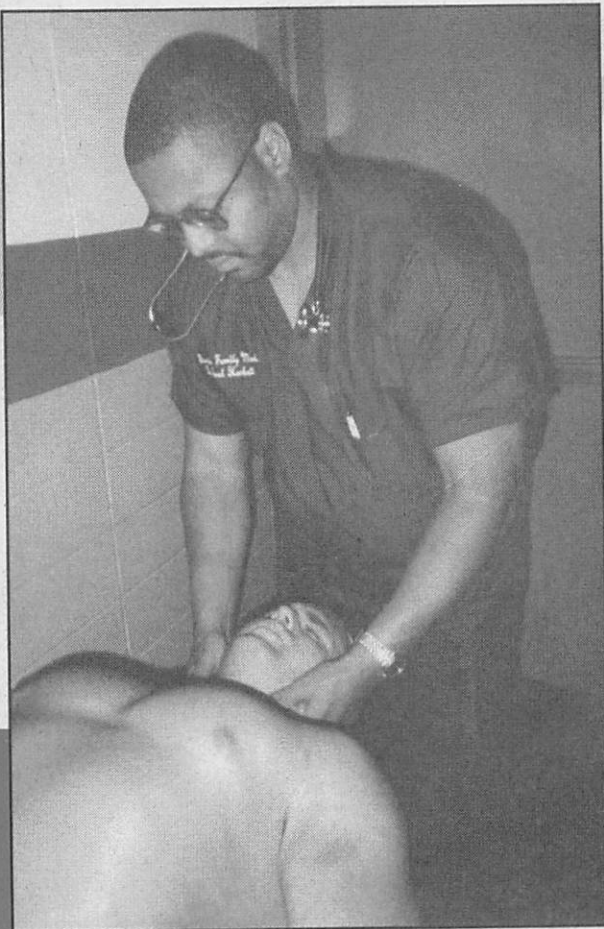
The open road gives a person time to think, plan, look backward, forward. Candido seemed to be

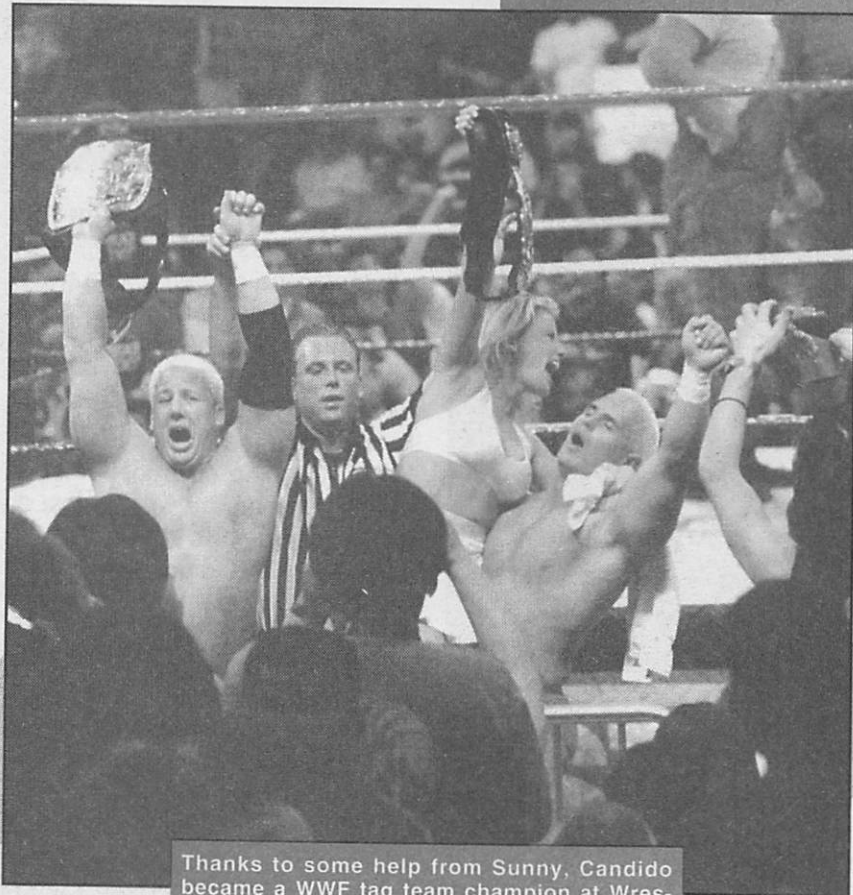
looking in all directions at one time. He popped open a can of Coke and looked in the mirror—no one behind him. The road ahead was dotted with slow-moving vehicles that repeatedly got in his way.

Just like my wrestling career, he mused sourly. *Always someone or something getting in my way.*

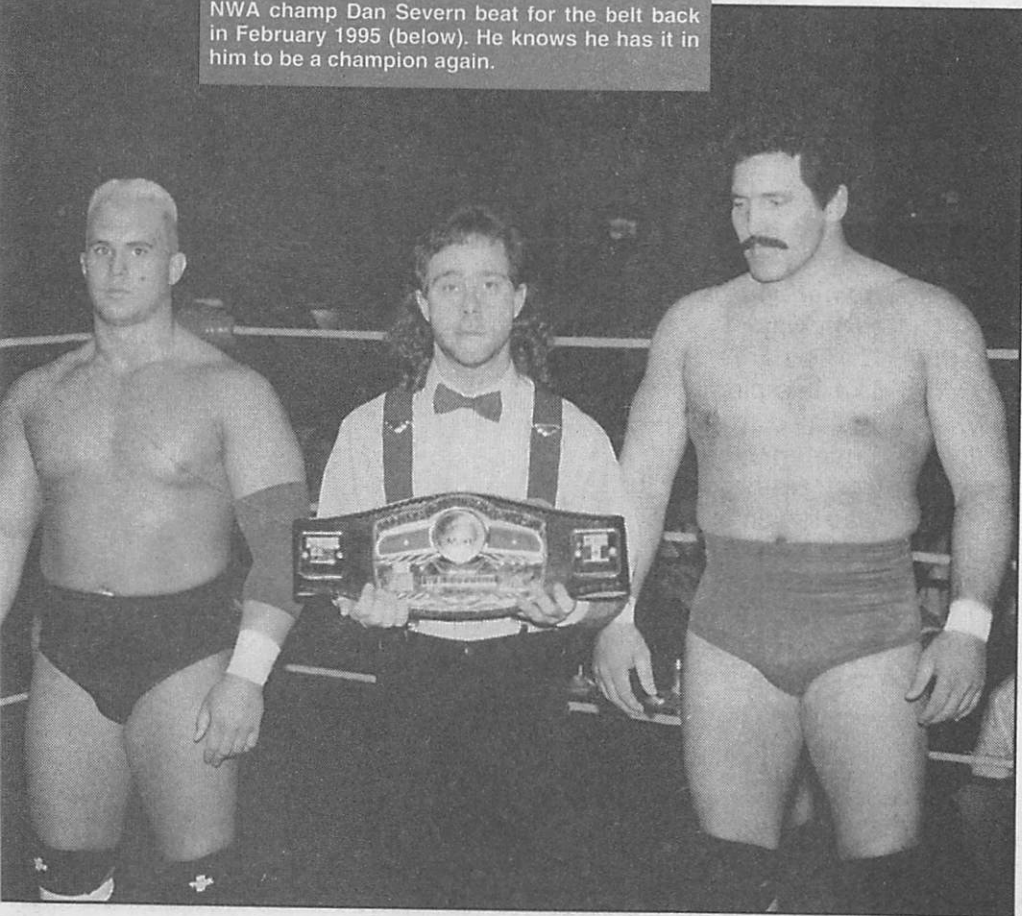
His career was like this circuitous journey to some undetermined outpost. His destiny? It was like an exit that had been eliminated by some wise-guy highway worker who liked to steal road signs.

Candido's neck was injured fairly seriously a few months ago, and must be watched closely by his doctor. His heart didn't seem to be into wrestling in the WWF when he recovered, and he recently left the federation.





Thanks to some help from Sunny, Candido became a WWF tag team champion at WrestleMania XII (above), and it was he who current NWA champ Dan Severn beat for the belt back in February 1995 (below). He knows he has it in him to be a champion again.



commodities. She formed The Bodydonnas when they were promising and dumped them after they had relinquished the tag team title to the Godwinns.

Candido fast-forwarded the tape to his personal rock anthem, "Rock And Roll All Night." The song still electrified him. It proved that the tandem of Gene Simmons and Paul Stanley could keep this modestly talented group alive and thriving for a quarter-century.

It told Candido he would always have a shot at gold belts, even when he was 50. But what was he to do now that he was out of the WWF?

Should I seek Sunny's help again? he pondered. *What would Gene and Paul do?*

Candido zipped in and out of lanes, snaking past a string of cars that couldn't get out of third gear. Similarly, he had to get his career out of third gear. He *had* to.

As a wrestler, he was on his own, as he was alone on this high-

way. He glanced at the map again. He felt his heart jump in his throat. He saw the town for which he was looking. Down the winding road some 60 miles.

He was getting there ... slowly, surely. He smiled. It would turn out okay.

Candido lowered the blaring stereo as he approached more cars. He jerked his car to the left and began to pass a gold Lexus. Candido craned his neck to peer at the driver. A petite blonde, barely tall enough to see over the dashboard, smiled back at him. Her lips were cherry-red, her smile puckish and sarcastic. Her eyes seemed to laugh at him.

Candido showed what a great athlete he is during a series of grueling matches with Tracey Smothers in Smoky Mountain back in 1994. He is probably better off in Japan and/or ECW than in the WWF.

Candido felt his stomach quiver; he looked away and raced off.

If that wasn't Sunny's double, I don't know who is.

He turned off the stereo, concentrated on the road before him.

The blonde in the Lexus had pushed his buttons. The thought of Sunny had filled him with anger. Not only had she bolted on him just when he was building toward a brilliant future, she had mocked him.

"Skip's not sure if he wants to wrestle as a singles competitor, try to get the Bodydonnas back together, or find a new partner, or what," she had said. "We had a good run together, and there are no hard feelings on my part. He just needed someone to talk to, and I'm a real good listener, you know."

Sunny, a good listener? Yeah, and I'm a great sumo wrestler.

Candido shoved the images of Sunny and her facsimile from his mind.

The road ahead was clear now. His thoughts were less jumbled. A long drive can give a man focus.

There would be no reincarnation of The Bodydonnas, he told himself. Why rehash the past? A new tag team partner? Perhaps. But who? Kiss always had balance between Gene and Paul. Similarly, Candido knew he needed a partner who was his athletic and emotional equal. He wouldn't rush his search.

That left him alone, to fight singles matches ... in ECW and maybe Japan.

Just me and my personal demons, the way it was meant to be.

It wasn't exactly a game plan, but as I-95 slowly led him to his destination, Candido knew that if

he kept his wits, he would arrive at that town called Destiny.

His trip was almost over, as was *Kiss Alive III*.

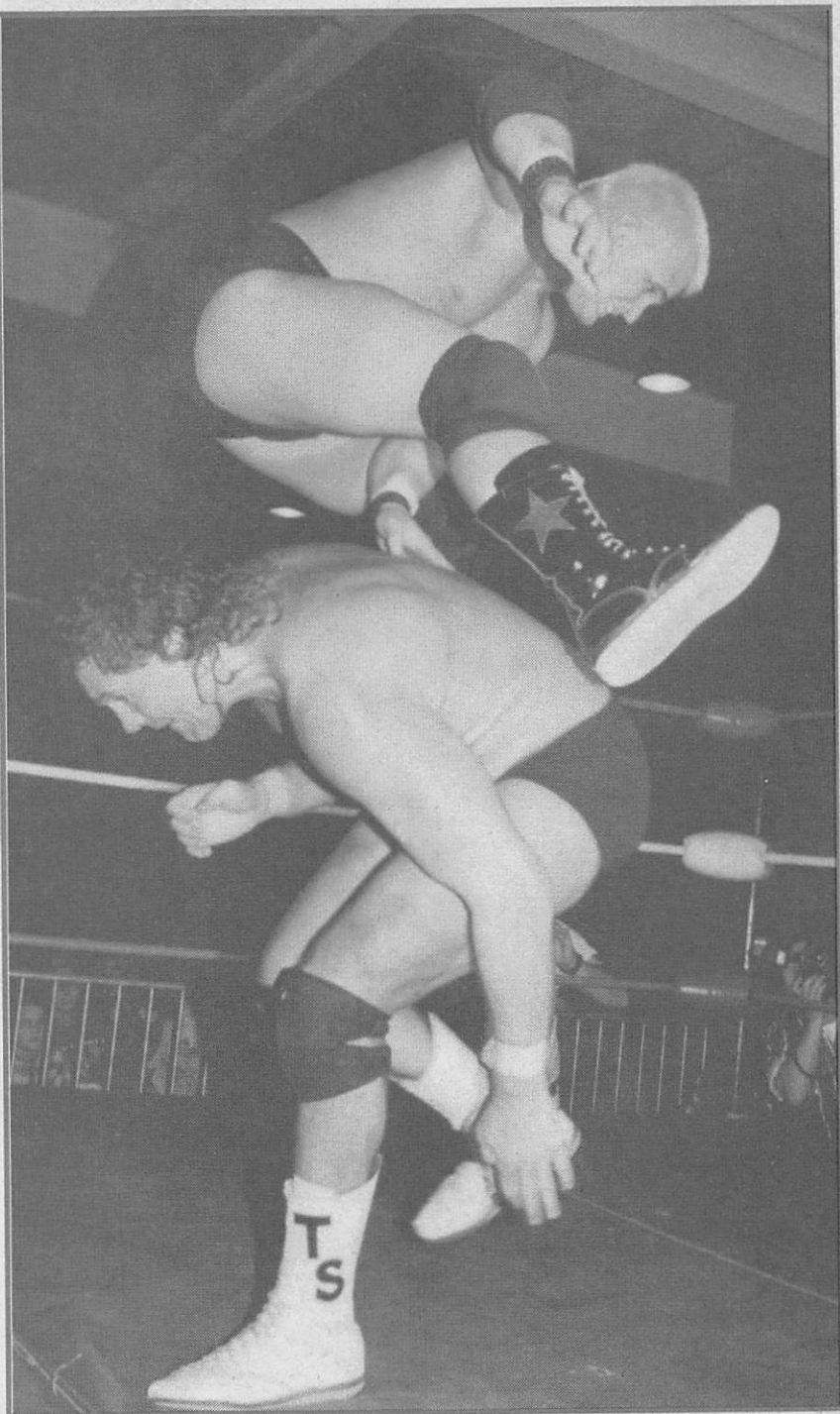
Candido pulled out the tape and replaced it with the Led Zeppelin classic, *The Song Remains The Same*.

The song did remain the same, Candido considered. *If you were talented and confident, you eventually cradled a gold belt in your*

hands. Candido had done so. He would do so again.

As the sounds of Zeppelin blared in his ears, Candido saw the exit for which he'd been waiting. He headed off the highway to a place that two hours ago did not seem to exist.

But two hours ago, Chris Candido was merely Skip, ex-Bodydonnas anchor, in search of himself.



Trouble In IS THERE WITHIN

The New World Order is all about insurgence. By being insurgent, Hulk Hogan won his second WCW World title, and Scott Hall and Kevin Nash won their first WCW tag title. But are Hall and Nash getting too insurgent for the NWO's own good?

Photos by Bill Apter

Photo by John S. Pithers

When Hulk Hogan is around, Ted DiBiase is usually quite willing to allow him to do most of the talking for the NWO (right). But what about Hall and Nash (above)? Are they strong-willed enough to go it on their own?

Egoville: AN nWo THE nWo?

By Steve Anderson

WRESTLING super-groups have been called everything from families to alliances to corporations to clubs. They have all had at least two things in common: They were all strong

forces during their infancies, and they all weakened because of ego clashes.

The Four Horsemen, for example, have tossed out almost as many members as they have recruited.

When Scott Hall, Kevin Nash, and Hulk Hogan

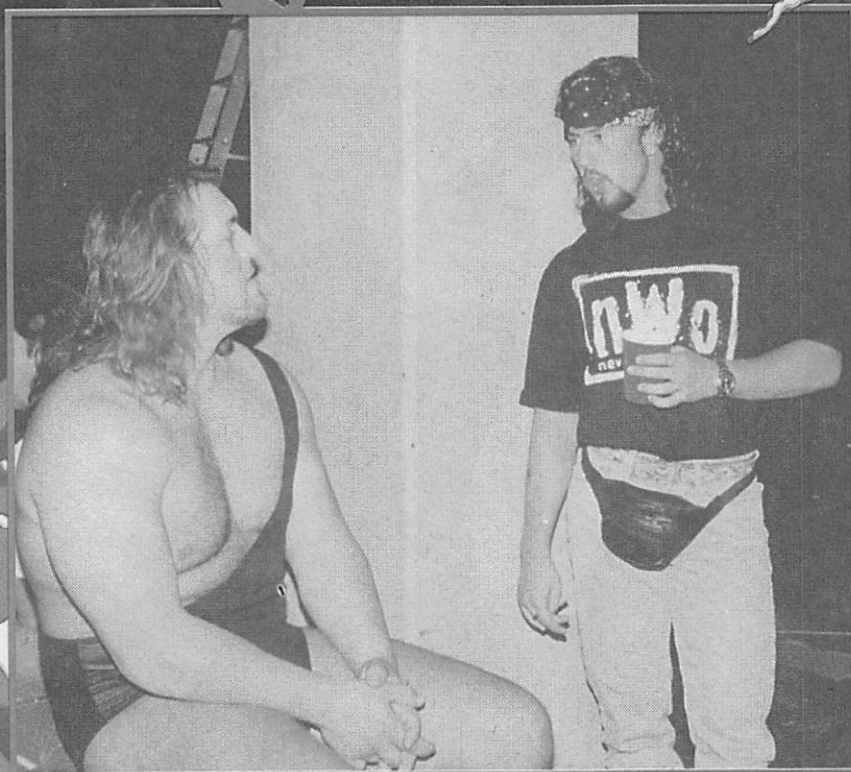
formed the New World Order, many feared the power of those three united, but even more questioned their ability to co-exist for long. Hall and Nash have enjoyed their share of the spotlight in the WWF. Joining Hogan meant they'd have to set up residence in his shadow.

They must have known that going in, right?

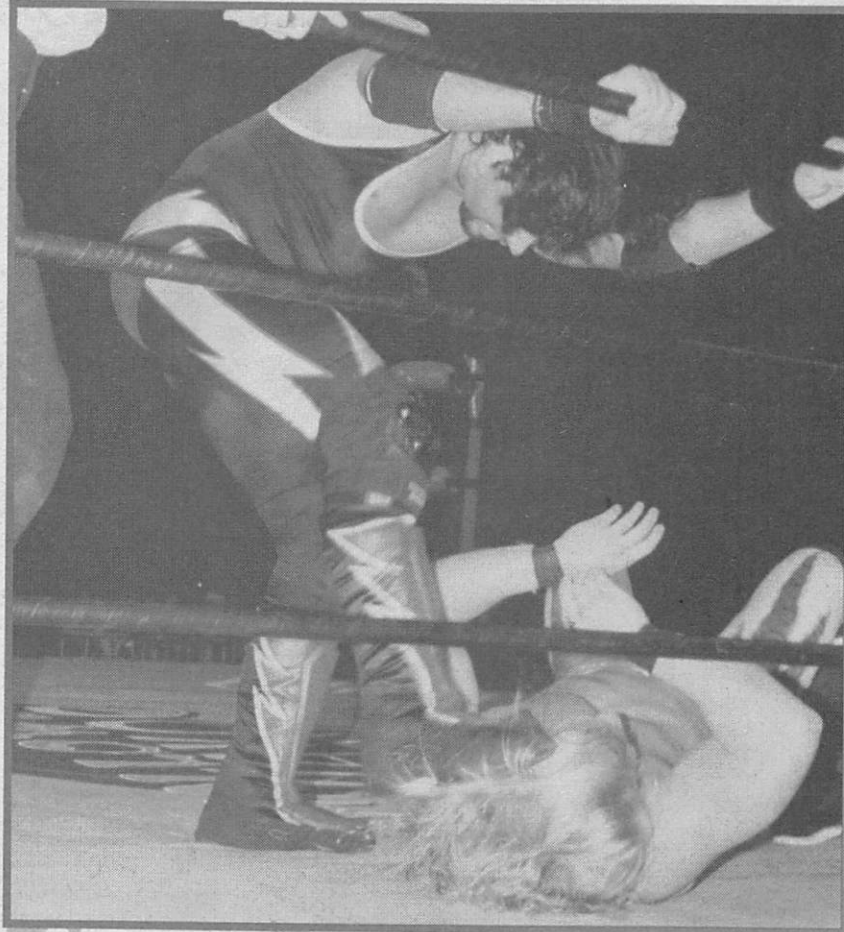
As the NWO has grown, there have been disputes over certain personnel additions. Rumors have included the following: Hall and Nash wanted Six in, but Hogan didn't, although he eventually gave in. Hogan wanted The Giant. Hall and Nash weren't crazy about that idea, but they went along with it. The addition of Vincent was all Ted DiBiase's brain-child. The others scratched their heads at first.

And let's not even get into the Jeff Jarrett controversy.

The most key personnel dispute at this point is Sting. At a *Nitro* card in Mankato, Minnesota, in October, Hall and Nash led the NWO contingent to the ring for a powwow with Sting. Hall and Nash wanted the



Six and The Giant talk strategy before a card. Some of the members of the NWO weren't sure Six belonged at first, but that conflict was nothing compared to the problem the NWO could soon have with Hall and Nash.



Both Six (against Chris Jericho) and The Giant (against Jeff Jarrett) came out of Halloween Havoc with key victories. Hall and Nash's win, however, was bigger, and their egos are being fueled by the fans' cheers.

"Stinger" to commit to the NWO. Hogan was reportedly livid, because he is still smarting from his conflicts with Sting. And Sting would undoubtedly dim that bright spotlight that still shines on the "Hulkster."

Call them ego clashes or growing pains, the NWO wasn't nearly as united as its members tried to get you to believe this fall.

But those were all just petty disagreements. They came up, were dealt with appropriately, and forgotten.

Now, however, the NWO might have a *real* problem on its hands. Don't be surprised if Hall and Nash form their own separate renegade organization—an NWO within the NWO, you

might call it.

Yes, you read that right.

Today's NWO revolves around Hogan, as it probably should. He is the WCW (he says NWO) World heavyweight champion. It was the first and most important title claimed by the NWO. The main goal of the group quickly became to protect Hogan and his title. But things changed at Halloween Havoc.

Hall and Nash defeated Harlem Heat for the WCW (they, too, say NWO) World tag team title. Suddenly there were two WCW championships controlled by the controversial clique. It was time to spread the spray paint around a little. Hall and Nash had their share of glory, with no assistance from Hogan.

The victory was sweet for Hall and Nash on a number of levels. They proved that they



could survive and thrive outside the WWF. They also proved that they could function without the outside interference of their cohorts. Finally, they earned a legitimate share of the NWO spotlight. But we all know that the bravado and ego of "Hollywood" Hogan will not allow that to happen.

Which means that the NWO might have its own internal insurgence to worry about.

Even though they cast themselves as two bad dudes, Hall and Nash have enjoyed a renewed popularity with some fans. Their every heinous act gets cheered in arenas around the country. The loudest and most positive crowd response to a victory at Halloween Havoc came when Hall pinned Booker T. The Giant, Six, and even Hogan got at best mixed responses.

All those cheers only feed the already-huge egos of Hall and Nash. Soon they might not be so receptive to the advice and suggestions of their leader. *Why get lost in such a big*

group? they'll think. We're good enough and bad enough to rule the world on our own. If they do go, maybe they'll take Six with them.

"That's a lot of crap, brother," hissed Hogan. "Hall and Nash are the cornerstones of this organization. We're all in this together, man. No matter what."

But others are saying differently. It is a well-known fact that Hall and Nash are on the road three or four days of most weeks fighting the NWO's battles. Hogan's schedule is a bit more flexible. He makes weekly appearances on *Nitro* and defends his belt at his discretion. Hall and Nash don't have that luxury, but maybe they wish they did.

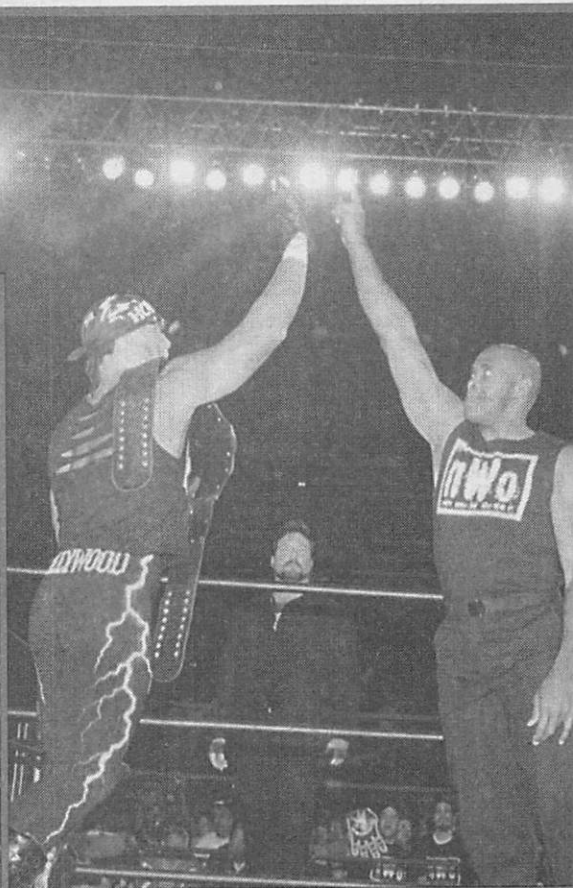
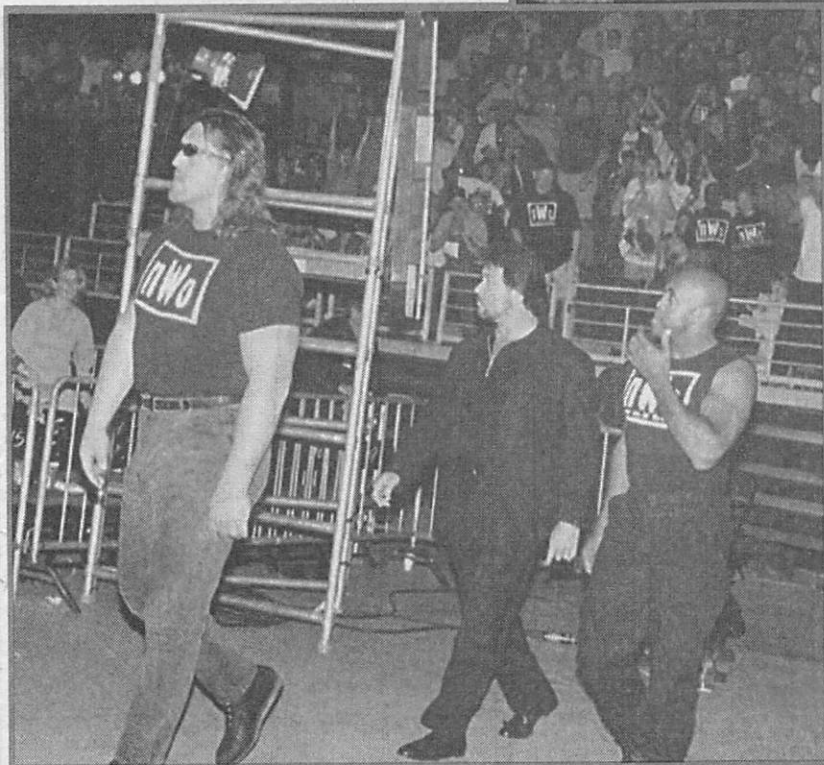
"Sure Hogan is our crown jewel," said Ted DiBiase. "As

NWO World champion, he sets his own schedule. He has every right to. Scott and Kevin fully understand that. They're happy, period. Any rumors to the contrary are just that—meaningless rumors that we'll ignore."

Hall and Nash just shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders when asked about this scenario.

But ignoring what is a very realistic possibility won't make what could be a huge problem go away. Just imagine: One of wrestling's hottest feuds, WCW vs. NWO, could turn into WCW vs. NWO vs. NNWO.

For now at least, united the New World Order stands. But divided the New World Order falls—or forms a New New World Order. □



As long as Hulk Hogan is around (above), the other members of the NWO will have to take a backseat to him. That includes The Giant, DiBiase, and Vincent (left). For Hall and Nash, that could be too much to take.



You Settle It! Who's More Popular...

BRET
HART



SHAWN
MICHAELS?



**Both are loved,
admired, and
respected by
millions, but they
can't seem to get
along in the WWF.
But we want you
to make a choice.
If you could only
cheer one, who
would it be?**

BRET HART. SHAWN MICHAELS. Who's more respected, beloved, admired, popular?

What's better, a rich red wine or a sparkling Chablis? A bold Lexus, or a dashing Porsche?

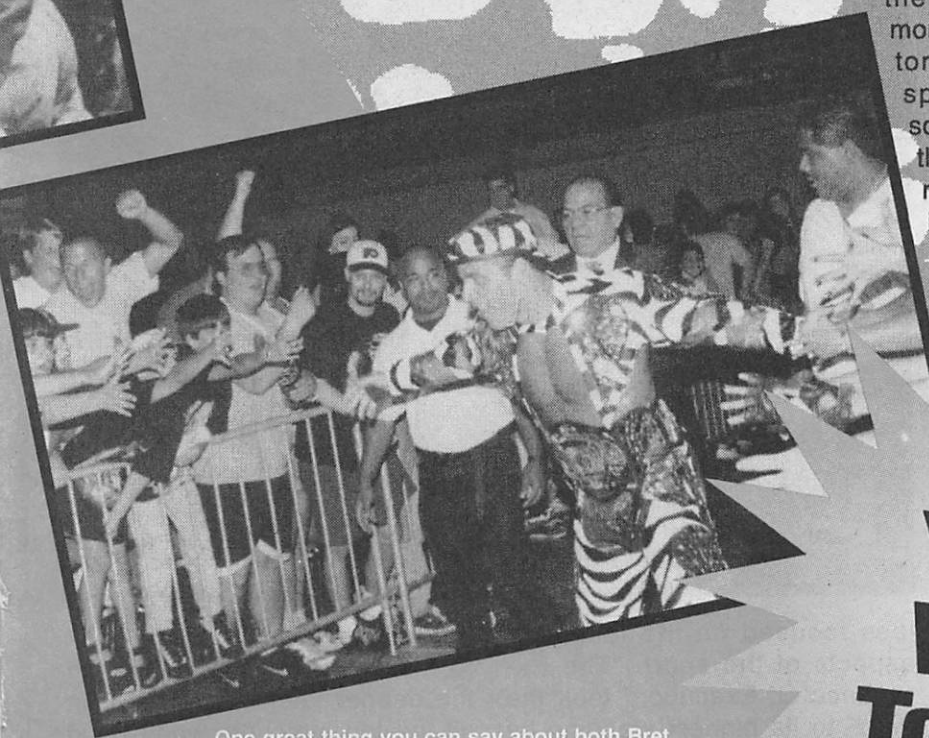
You say *tomato*, I say *tamato*. Let's call the whole thing off ...

This might be a no-win proposition. How can any journalist objectively say which of these two future WWF Hall of Famers is more popular? Both have been respected ambassadors for the WWF, although each has used his unique skills in different ways as monarch.

It seems the older fans embrace Hart and his low-key, mature, lead-by-example approach. Michaels appeals more to the younger fans, who view "The Heartbreak Kid" as the swaggering pirate they wish to emulate.

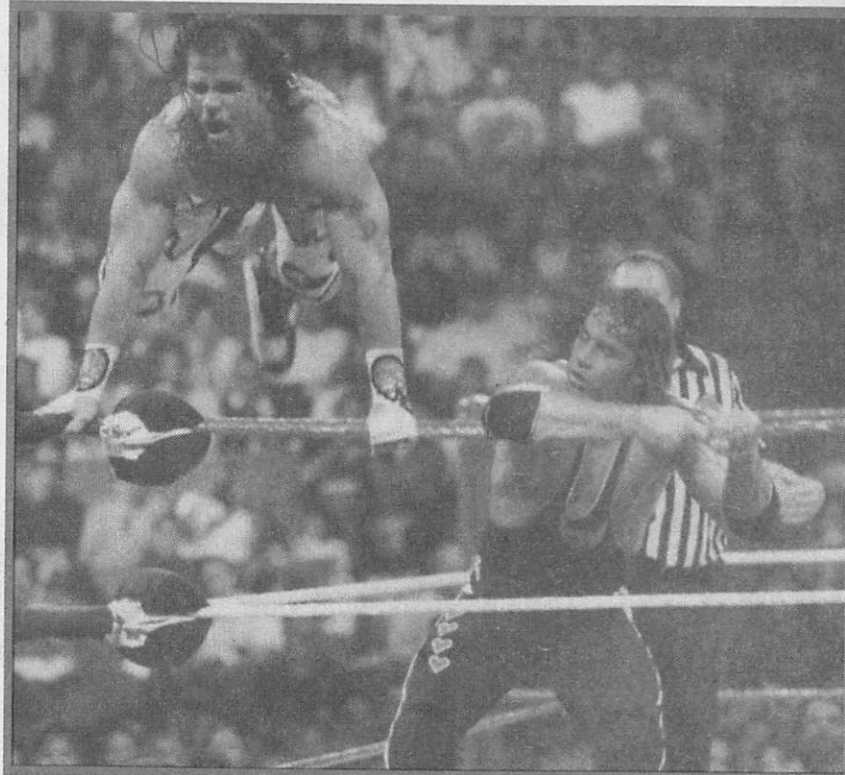
Who is more popular? If you judge the audience's response to Hart's return to the WWF in late-October, you might draw the conclusion he is more popular now.

It was during a live broadcast of *Monday Night Raw* that Hart publicly announced he would spend the remainder of his career in the WWF. He gave a captivating monologue that will go down in history as one of the most heartfelt speeches ever issued from the squared circle. In essence, he said this: I am back because the WWF needs a leader. Shawn Michaels is not that leader.



One great thing you can say about both Bret Hart (opposite page, left) and Shawn Michaels (above) is that they always have time for the fans both before and after their matches.

**Cast
Your
Vote
Today!**

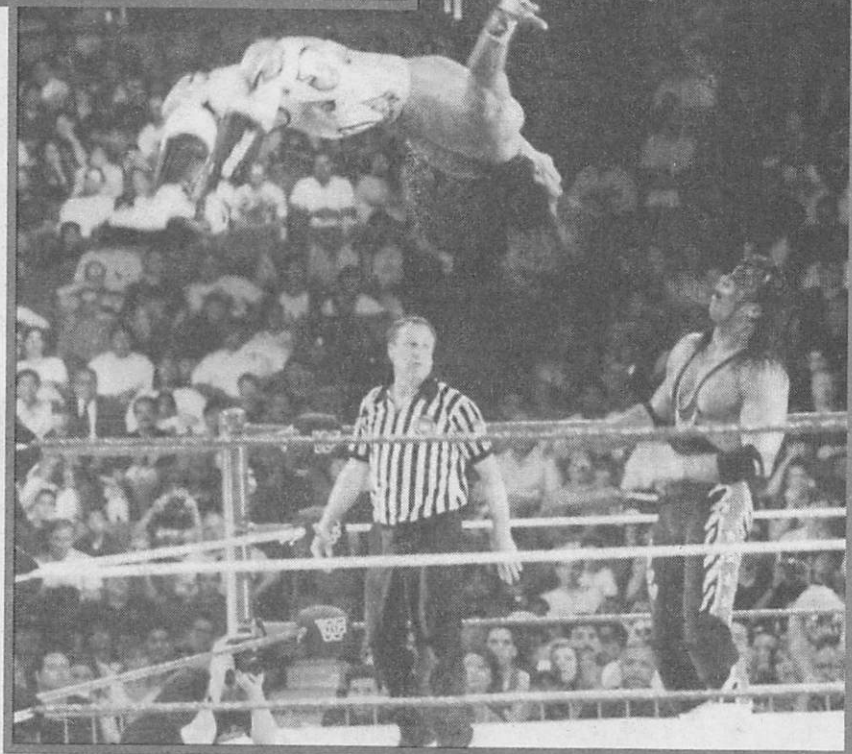


Just as their personalities and their views on leadership are vastly different, so are the wrestling styles of Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels. They had a great match at WrestleMania XII, and the rivalry will soon continue.

"Shawn Michaels, there is just something about you that really bugs me," admitted an annoyed Hart. "Shawn Michaels, you might be a little younger than I am, you might even be a little more popular ... Shawn Michaels is a great wrestler and has done a great job as champion. There are two things Shawn Michaels will never, ever be. He will never, ever be as tough as me, and he will never, ever be as smart as me."

Hart, during his seven-month hiatus, bemoaned a lack of intelligent leadership in the WWF. Although he was torn between pursuing his career after wrestling and returning to rescue the WWF, he made the only choice he could make: He returned to get a struggling federation back on course.

Clearly, with Michaels running the show, the WWF has become more entertainment-oriented and



less focused on the technical aspects of the sport. "The Excellence Of Execution" took the WWF to its highest standing by lifting wrestling to a new standard of excellence.

With Hart sidelined, WWF mainstays Diesel, Jeff Jarrett, The 1-2-3 Kid, Ted DiBiase, and

Razor Ramon each left the WWF for the rival WCW. WCW management even made a series of lucrative offers to Hart that he admitted were very tempting.

But Hart chose to spurn the advances of his former colleagues. The WWF now might not be what it was during Hart's proud reign, but it is likely to change, to grow, to regain its outstanding reputation tarnished by a current champion some say is more interested in his reflection than the good of the organization.

Perhaps that's why Hart's return was met by such an unabashed show of affection. A huge legion of fans wants things

the way they used to be—back to the era when the WWF had the deeper talent roster, put on all the top matches, when ruled Monday nights.

Hart has the savvy and desire to make changes. He doesn't shake his hips as seductively as Michaels. He will never make the



Shawn (left) and Bret (below) can argue all they want about what the perfect role model should be like or who's the better leader for the WWF, but their time is better spent meeting with special kids. Both have been known to do that.



girls swoon when he enters the arena. But kids respect him; moreover, he respects the fans. He desperately needs to please the fans and make them proud of the WWF.

Under Hart, the WWF is sophisticated; it is the Lexus.

Under Michaels, it is the Porsche—fast and always frantically racing ahead, hardly certain of its destiny.

But Michaels' proponents ask what's so bad about playing things loose and charismatically?

Nothing, if it works. "The Heartbreak Kid" can turn an ostensibly dull mismatch against a subpar nemesis such as Mankind into a memorable event. Michaels not only wins, he wins with gusto. He makes every wrestler around him better, and that is the true earmark of a champion. He brings a love for the sport that is infectious.

Compared to Michaels, who is electricity in the ring, Hart is a scientist studiously poring over a new experiment. Their 60-plus-minute "Iron Man" match at WrestleMania XII proved how different these two stars are.

"I am really getting tired of all the comments about my perceived lack of leadership qualities," Michaels said shortly after Hart announced his return to the

WWF. "Bret Hart is a champion, and I respect him as a wrestler. But he's just jealous that I hold the belt now. I found his comments insulting; I give the fans what they want to see. That's the true sign of a leader. Fans don't want to spend a half-hour watching someone talk about signing autographs for kids at the Wailing Wall. He's back because he can't stand looking at himself in the mirror and not

seeing a gold belt."

Fans look at Michaels' swagger and envision themselves being that bold, that confident, that popular.

Hart is the role model; Michaels plays the role for which we all secretly yearn.

Hart or Michaels? Red or white wine? The choice is yours. ☐

NAME _____

CITY _____

AGE _____

WHO DO YOU LIKE BETTER? (check one)

SHAWN _____ BRET _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Send your vote to: Shawn vs. Bret, c/o INSIDE WRESTLING, Box 1148, Ft. Washington, PA 19034

(Results will appear in a future edition of INSIDE WRESTLING)

WCW

WRESTLERS

RALLY

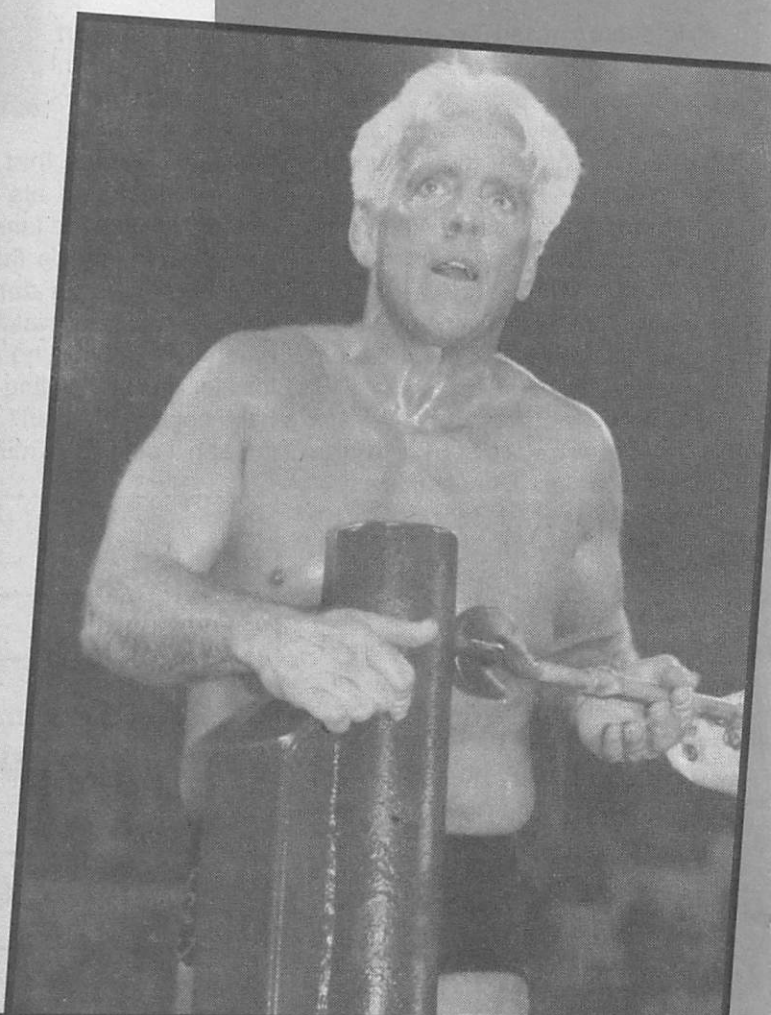
BEHIND

RIC FLAIR:

Ric Flair has become famous for being a "ring general."

In WCW's battles with the NWO, that tag has never been more fitting.

But a serious shoulder injury might threaten his rank, career, and the very future of WCW



"You Can't

By Steve Anderson

WHO WAS IT that first said war is hell?

It wasn't anyone who's now wrestling in WCW, but it might as well have been. For months, WCW's best have been battling the New World Order, and each fight seems more hellish than the last.

This summer, many in WCW

hoped that Hulk Hogan would lead them in their charge against the invasion of The Outsiders, Scott Hall and Kevin Nash. Hogan quickly dashed those hopes and befriended Hall and Nash.

Then WCW turned to Sting to lead the charge. But one big misunderstanding between Sting and WCW led him to declare himself a free agent and go into semi-seclusion.

Randy Savage is mentally, physically, and emotionally spent from his wars with Hogan and the NWO. His WCW future remains uncertain.

Lex Luger is always under a cloud of suspicion.

There was only one man remaining. A man who for the most part has plied his trade in WCW and remained loyal to WCW: "Nature Boy" Ric Flair.

"War in wrestling makes for strange bedfellows, that's for sure," said Flair. "But when it comes to Hogan and his cronies, I'm the general, and I'm always ready for battle."

But being a leader such as he is made Flair a prime target for the NWO. For one night, he let his guard down, and that was one night too many. As he was preparing to defend his U.S. title against Savage on *WCW Monday Nitro* on October 7, Flair was attacked near a dressing room by the NWO. They inflicted damage on Flair's right shoulder, which had been injured a few weeks previous in Japan.

Flair reluctantly gave in when his doctors, having already done an MRI on the shoulder, advised him to have surgery. The surgery, however, would require Flair to be out of action for at least three months, if not longer. And his doctors also discussed an issue that was completely unacceptable to Flair at this point in his career: retirement.

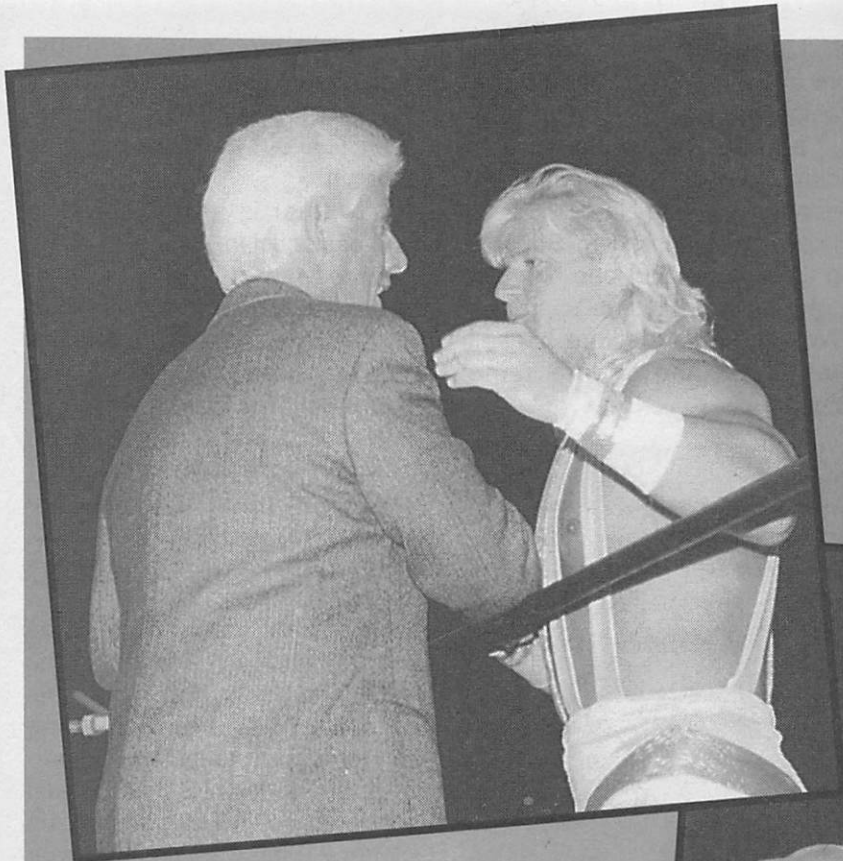
"I agreed to have the surgery," Flair recalled. "But with 'Hollywood' Hogan and his thugs vandalizing the place I call home, I will not leave yet. Not when they caused this."

When the news of his injury,

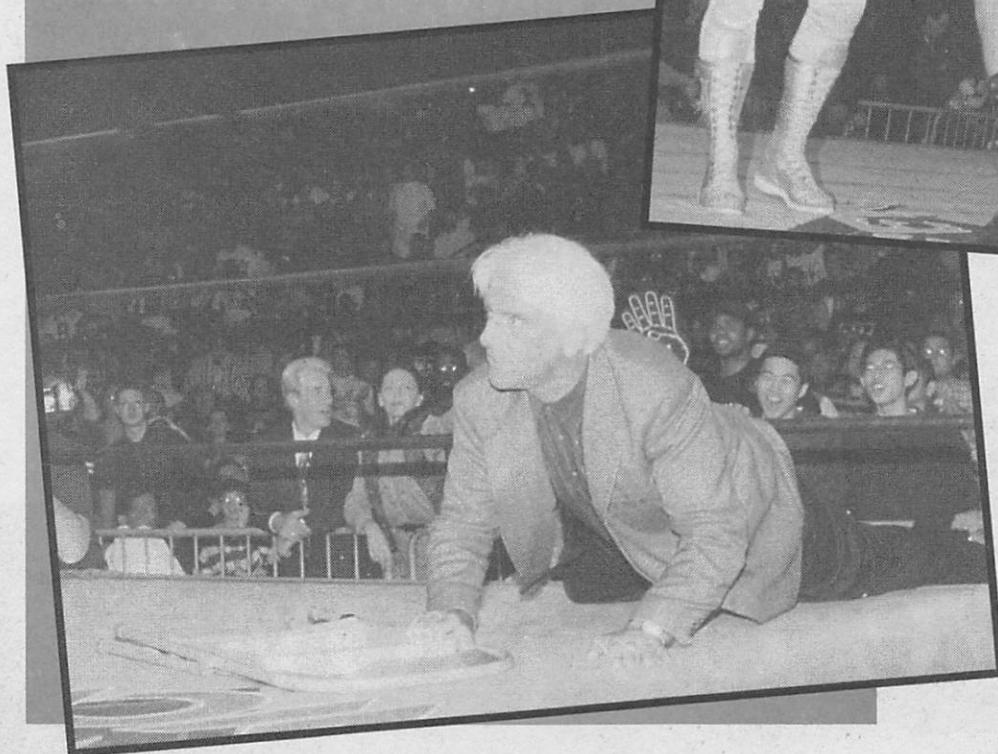
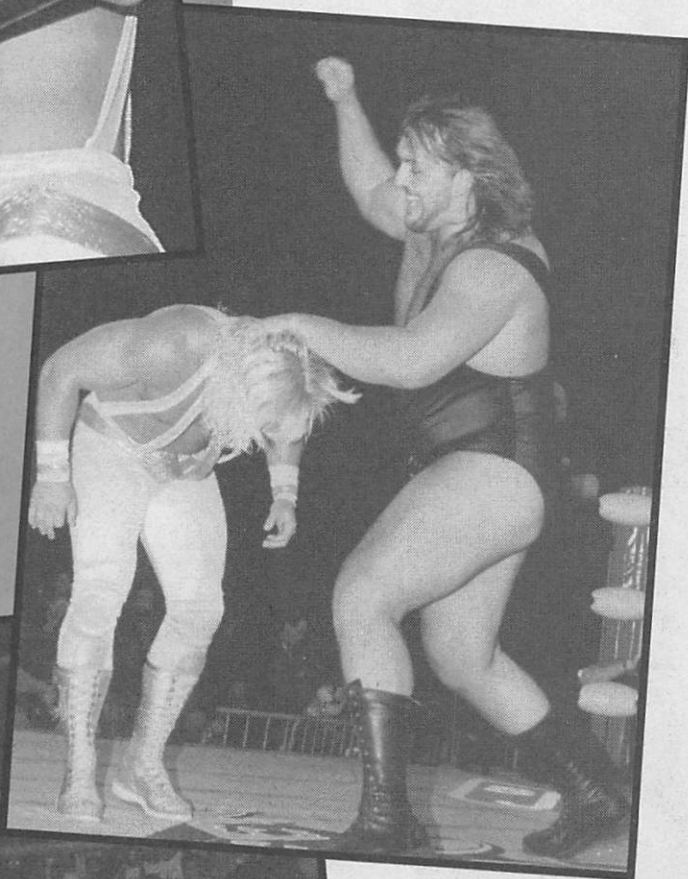
When Ric Flair (opposite page, left) is able to return to competition, his only goal will be to destroy "Hollywood" Hulk Hogan and the NWO (below). He'll have the full support of WCW's wrestlers, who were afraid they might lose their leader for good when he suffered a shoulder injury.



Leave Us Now!"



For now, Flair is lending his support to WCW newcomer Jeff Jarrett (above), who battled The Giant in Flair's place at Halloween Havoc (right), and got help from the "Nature Boy" at the end of the match (below). As a leader, though, Jarrett is no Flair.



surgery, and possible retirement spread, the wrestlers of WCW—rulebreakers and fan favorites alike—took it hard. Once again, a leader in their fight against the NWO had gone down and gone down hard.

"I've never seen eye-to-eye with Ric Flair," said Eddy Guerrero. "But we need him now more than ever. His injury comes at the worst time. You can't leave us now, Ric!"

"It just wouldn't be WCW without Flair," said Rey Mysterio Jr.

"Ric Flair is more than a leader of the Horsemen now," said his long-time friend Arn Anderson. "He's gathering the troops and laying out strategy. Nothing will keep him away."

Just Flair's presence may not be enough for WCW. They need him in the ring as well. Flair usually wrestles at his best

when the pressure is on. With the NWO recruiting from outside and within WCW, the promotion needs all the in-ring talent it can get.

"How many times has Ric Flair been counted out?" said the "Nature Boy" himself. "You can tell Hogan, Nash, Hall and all those intruders that I will be coming back stronger than ever."

"I can't wait for him to get back in the fray," said Hogan. "I'll never get tired of beating up on WCW's most famous relic. We'll just go after the other shoulder next time, brother. We'll give him a matching set of broken, useless wings!"

Retirement at this point is not an option for Flair. Two years ago at Halloween Havoc, Hogan forced him into it. After much lobbying of WCW officials and cajoling of Hogan himself, Flair was reinstated. Perhaps Hogan should have

left well enough alone.

"Even though Flair had no business coming back after that," said Hogan, "I wanted him back to prove *once again* that I am superior and he is nothing more than a gutless coward. Funny, but I feel the same way about him now."

But until he can come back, who takes over as the "general" of WCW? Savage or Luger? Only if WCW is truly desperate. Roddy Piper? Would WCW be comfortable following the lead of someone from the outside? Newcomer Jeff Jarrett has pledged his allegiance to WCW, but given his reckless, rulebreaking past in the WWF and the USWA, no one is sure if he is trustworthy.

"I'm more than happy to prove myself," said Jarrett. "I'll proudly carry the banner of WCW if they

want me to."

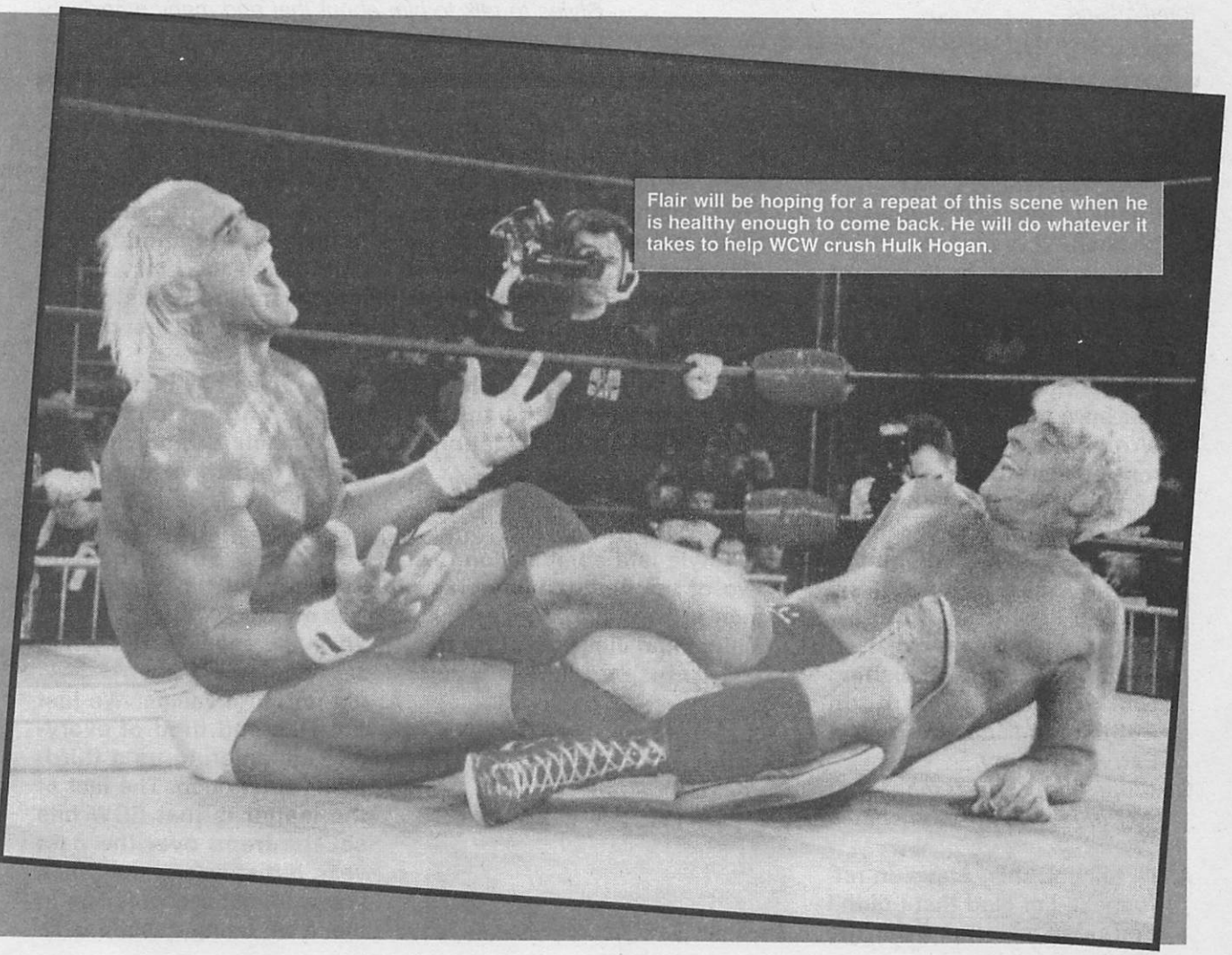
Even though he's a free agent, Sting is holding open the possibility of a return. If he does resist the temptations of the NWO, the "Stinger" could rightfully assume the mantle of leadership again.

"The only advice I have for whoever wants to lead WCW against the NWO is to be careful," said Sting. "That torch you carry could burn you."

"I'm not crying about this attack," said Flair. "Lord knows I've done this kind of thing myself. But I'll show 'Hollywood' Hogan and company that I'm still the dirtiest player in the game!"

So the battles continue and the leadership must come by committee. WCW's future is at stake.

Get well soon, Ric Flair. WCW needs you now more than you know. □



Flair will be hoping for a repeat of this scene when he is healthy enough to come back. He will do whatever it takes to help WCW crush Hulk Hogan.

JOEY STYLES

**"IT'S TIME YOU RECOGNIZED
ECW'S WORLD TITLE!"**

CAN ANYONE TALK about Extreme Championship Wrestling and not mention Joey Styles? For several years, Styles has served as the play-by-play man for ECW's syndicated television show. His unique style and catch phrases (including the famous "Oh my God!") have given him a tremendous fan following.

Styles' road to the ECW started right here in the offices of *INSIDE WRESTLING*. As an editorial assistant, he did some writing and filed a few pictures. He always showed he had a passion for the sport. Paul E. Dangerously noticed that during a visit to our editorial offices.

After meeting the aspiring journalist, Dangerously

saw a role for him in the promotion he was now calling home, Eastern (now Extreme) Championship Wrestling. Extreme violence, blood, and broken bones are the order for the day on any ECW broadcast. Styles would not have it any other way.

Yes, Styles has been contacted by the WWF, but he is happy commentating for the top independent promotion in the country. That, in itself is a sore spot for Styles and all of ECW. They consider the ECW heavyweight title a **world** title and have asked us to recognize it as such.

Senior Writer Steve Anderson sat down with Styles to talk to him about that and many other subjects after a recent ECW card.

Q: Joey, welcome, or should I say welcome back to the pages of *INSIDE WRESTLING*.

A: Thanks, Steve, it's great to be back.

Q: Tell us exactly how you got involved with Extreme Championship Wrestling.

A: I attended college close to the headquarters of *INSIDE WRESTLING*. Getting a job as a writer was all a part of my master plan to get on television as a wrestling commentator. I did some commentary for the NAWA's television shows that lasted all of six weeks. From that, I put together a tape. One day Paul E. Dangerously was visiting the offices of London Publishing, and the rest is Extreme history.

Q: What about the rumors that you've received offers from the WWF?

A: I'll tell you this, Steve. In retrospect, I'm glad that I didn't consider an offer from the

WWF. Look at Kevin Kelly. He hosted *Raw* and *Superstars* for several weeks. But once again, Vince McMahon made himself the play-by-play man for *Raw*, and now Jim Ross is play-by-play man for *Superstars*. More people across the country are seeing me than Kelly. I don't want to be the third string backup to McMahon and Ross.

Q: How did you develop your unique style?

A: My style is a combination of two of the best play-by-play men in wrestling, Vince McMahon and Jim Ross. I try to

"We just got sick and tired of everyone considering us a third-string promotion. The fact of the matter is that ECW has set the trend over the past year."

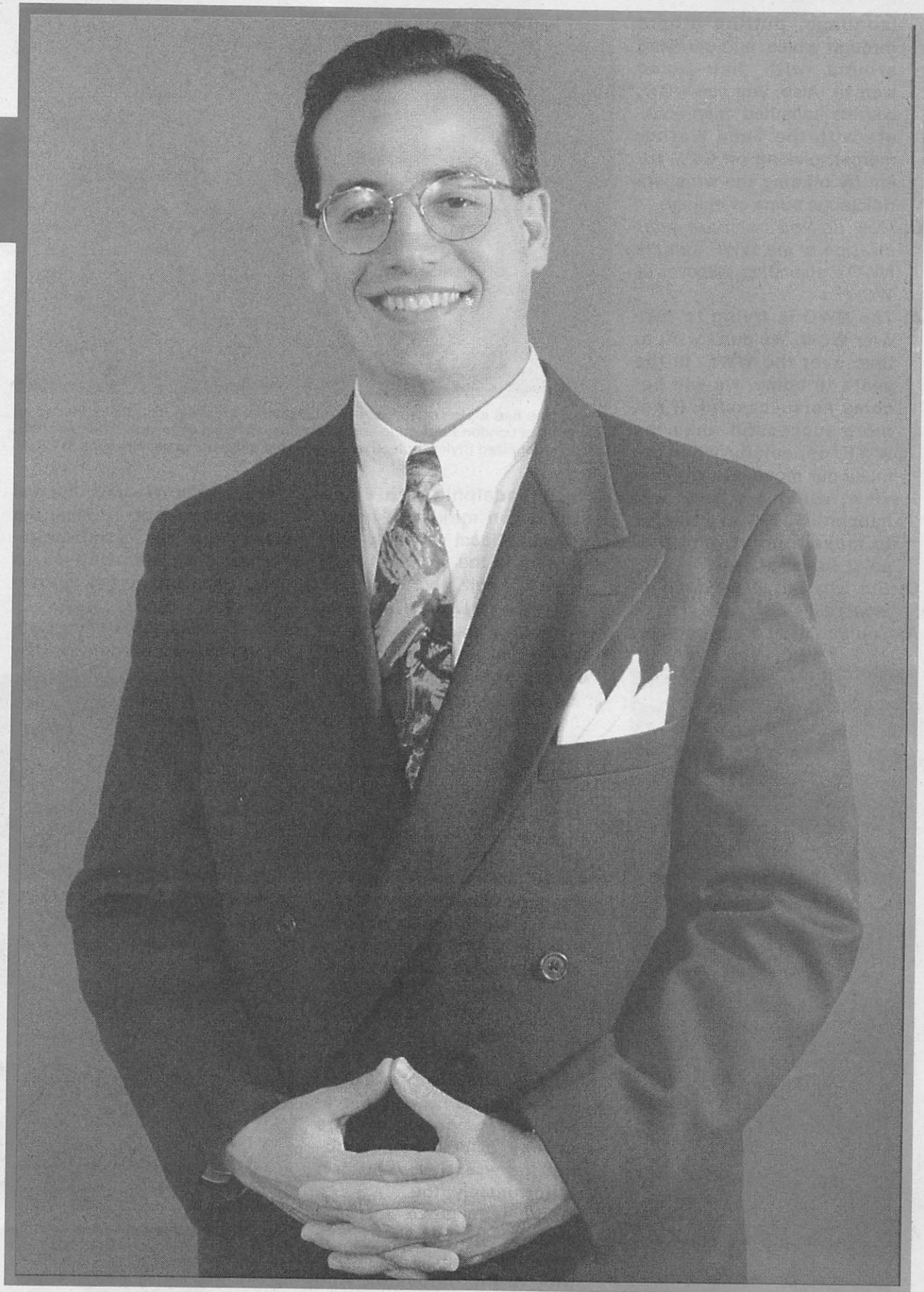
have the insight and knowledge of Jim Ross. That means knowing all the holds, be they Mexican, Japanese, or American. It's about being able to tell the story of the match and how this match came to be in the first place.

Q: And McMahon?

A: He can take any match, be it an opening match, a mid-card match, or a main event match and have the same energy level. By combining the analysis and the energy, you come out with Joey Styles. Just throw in a few "Oh my Gods!"

Q: Let's talk about ECW's "invasion" of the WWF.

A: It's not an invasion. We just got sick and tired of everyone considering us a third-string promotion. The fact of the matter is that ECW has set the trend over the past year. If that wasn't true, then you wouldn't see wrestlers in the WWF using questionable



language, putting others through tables, and parading around with half-naked women. Also, you see WCW, with its unlimited deep pockets with the Time Warner merger, picking off ECW talent by offering the wrestlers ridiculous sums of money.

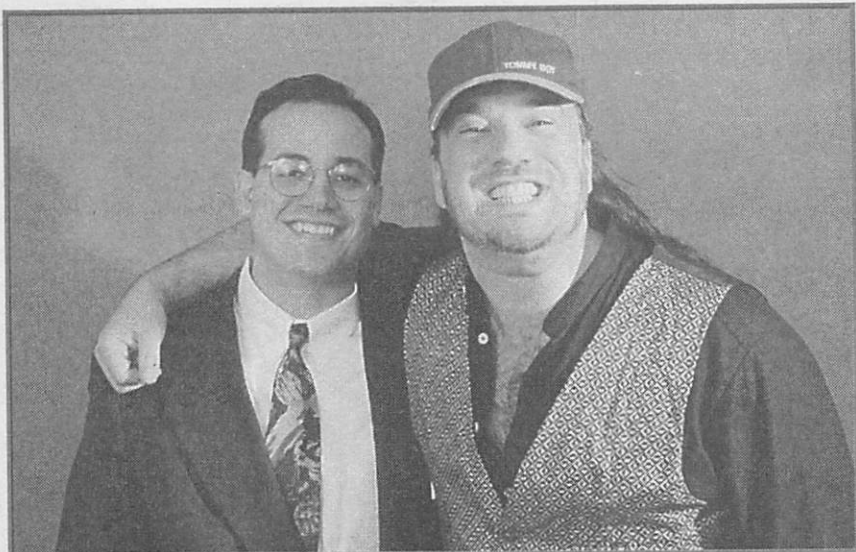
Q: How do you compare your invasion of the WWF with the NWO's attempted takeover of WCW?

A: The NWO is trying to take over WCW. We don't want to take over the WWF. In the years to come, we will become as successful, if not *more* successful, than the WWF, especially when we make our move into pay-per-view, which we hope will happen in 1997. We wanted to make a point, and that point was well-made.

Q: But why on a live national broadcast?

A: You don't run a pay-per-view

"ECW is revolutionizing the wrestling industry. Unfortunately, the WWF and WCW have more national exposure than we do. People who don't see us think that they're the innovator. And they're not!"



Joey Styles had a plan of success in professional wrestling, and that included an internship at London Publishing and an eventual meeting with Paul E. Dangerously. Paul E. recognized Styles' potential and used his influence to get him a job at ECW.

in Philadelphia with Vince McMahon making a crack about a "local wrestling promotion in the area and their legion of cult fans." We have more than cult fans. We have hardcore fans. We wanted to make that statement on our home turf.

Q: So both of the major promotions have been heavily influenced by ECW?

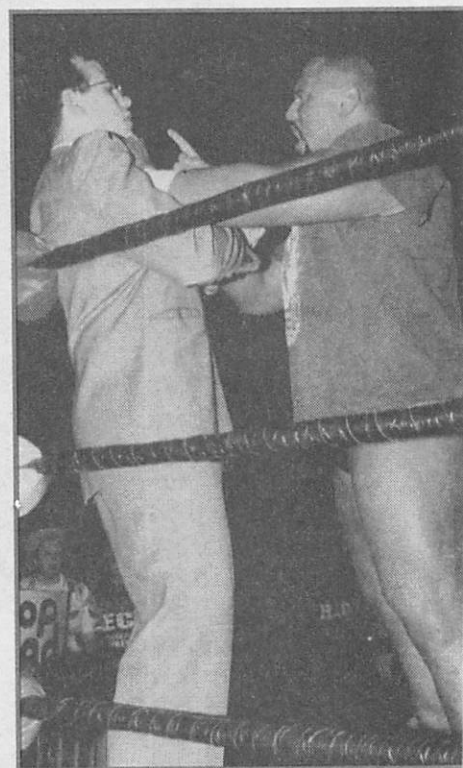
A: If ECW was not that influential, that would not be the case. I think we got sick and tired of the WWF blatantly ripping off what we do. We wanted to make a statement that Extreme Championship Wrestling is the innovator and not the imitator. The imitator is the World Wrestling Federation. Whether it's over or not ... I'm not going to answer that question.

Q: How have other promotions felt the growing influence of ECW?

A: The style has become prevalent in Mexico and in this country. ECW is revolutionizing the wrestling industry. Unfortunately, the WWF and WCW have more national exposure than we do. People who don't see us think that they're the innovator. And

they're *not!* We have the real fans, the hardcore fans, the fans that read your magazines. The fans who watch ECW know who the innovator is.

Q: We don't recognize your championship as a world title. How



Styles always speaks his mind, and that doesn't always go over well with men like Taz. He'll get pushed around a bit, but he'll never apologize for his views.

do you defend yourself against detractors, including us, who say that you don't deserve it?

A: Now you're pushing a hot button, Steve. The one argument I hear is that the ECW World title is only defended in Philadelphia. That's wrong. The world heavyweight title is defended in Philadelphia, Florida, and all over the



country. It was defended in front of two sellout crowds in Japan. Styles as seen about all there is to see in wrestling, yet he sometimes can't believe his eyes. Raven is a former holder of the ECW championship, which Styles and ECW fans insist should be recognized on the same level as the WWF and WCW titles.

Q: But what about the frequency of the title defenses and the quality of opposition?

A: The ECW belt is defended about twice a week against all challengers. Mikey Whipwreck successfully defended the title a year ago and pinned Steve Austin, who is now a top contender in the WWF. Konnan tried to take our World title and was unsuccessful. We're talking about world-class competitors, including Faarooq and Flash Funk. These are men

who tried to wrest our World heavyweight title from men like The Sandman, Whipwreck, and Raven, and they were unsuccessful. ECW has more influence on wrestling than any other promotion in existence today. It's time you recognized ECW's World title!

Q: What do you think about other promotions, notably the USWA and the AWF, who also say that they deserve world title status?

A: The USWA, as far as I know, is only competing in Memphis at a flea market, and their crowds are down to about 300 people. The quality of wrestlers is nowhere near the quality of ECW's. As far as the AWF, don't even bring that up. That's like a bunch of old-timers. They were great in their time. The AWF is a mockery of what professional wrestling is. It's a glimpse into the past.

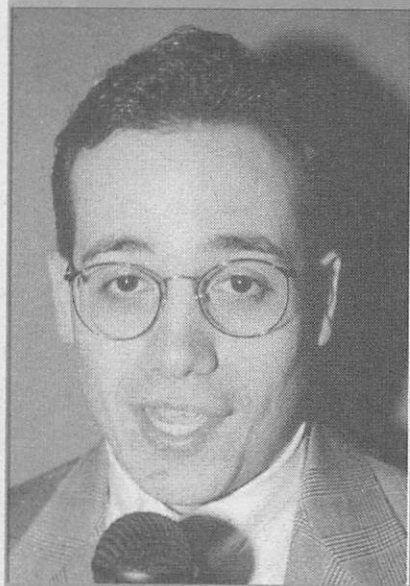
Q: Earlier, you mentioned a possible pay-per-view. How do you think ECW can compete in a somewhat saturated pay-per-view market?

A: I'm not saying that ECW is going to do one a month, because we're not going to choke the goose that lays the golden egg like the WWF and WCW. They not only choked the goose, they beheaded him, roasted him, and served him on a silver platter. We may start out quarterly. Because there are so many, the WWF and WCW are running very average pay-per-views.

Q: How will an ECW pay-per-view be better and yet different?

A: I think that after our first one, the fans will know that it is something special. I think fewer people will be buying WCW and WWF pay-per-views and will instead spend their money wisely on

"ECW wrestling fans are the kind of people who would cheer the hunter who shot Bambi's mother. This is a tough audience."



ECW. And if you think I'm kidding, you just wait until you see the first one. It will be like nothing else in the history of wrestling pay-per-views.

Q: How do you feel about the fans of ECW?

A: I love the fans. ECW wrestling fans are the kind of people who would cheer the hunter who shot Bambi's mother. This is a tough audience. You know how the song about New York goes? Well, if you can make it in ECW and get the ECW fans to love you and respect you, you can make it anywhere in the world. ECW fans tell you like it is. They are not five-year-old kids waving foam fingers and wearing "Hulkster" bandannas or big, goofy "Macho Man" cowboy hats. They know the difference between good wrestling and bad wrestling. They will let you know vocally what the difference is. □

JUSHIN



Jushin Liger had two big battles to fight this summer and fall.

Okay, so the one against a brain tumor was more serious than the one against Chris Benoit in the ring, but Liger came out a winner in both

"I Told Chris Benoit To Cripple Me!"

Photos by Koichi Yoshizawa

LIGER'S

TRIUMPHANT RETURN!

By Steve Anderson

EVEN THOUGH Jushin Liger was only away from the ring for a few months, his was one of the most eagerly anticipated comebacks in the history of Japanese wrestling. After all, he hadn't spent his time away from

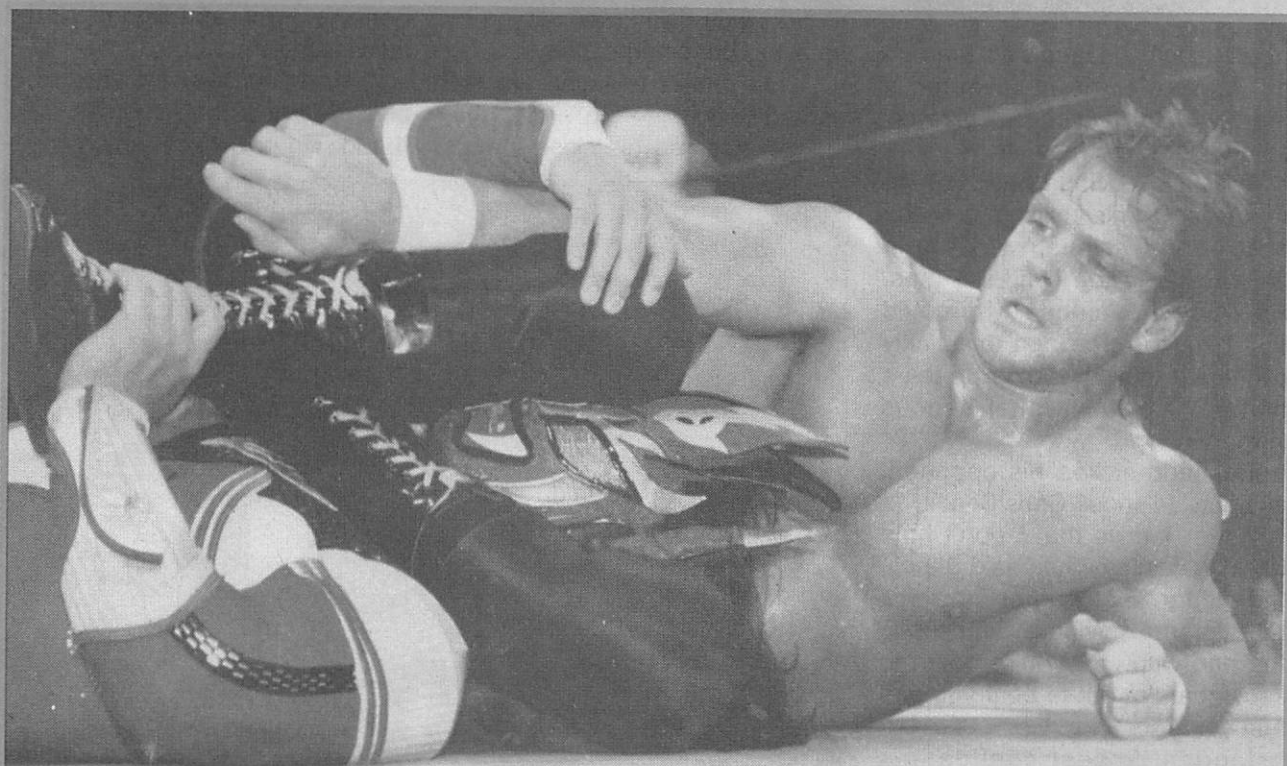
the ring relaxing with his family or filming a movie. No, Liger had been away because he needed surgery to remove a benign brain tumor.

In the weeks leading up to the comeback, those close to Liger encouraged him to take it slow at first, to wrestle a tuneup match or

two. They wanted Liger to hand-pick an opponent who would challenge him, but also someone who wouldn't pose any serious threat to a man of his skills.

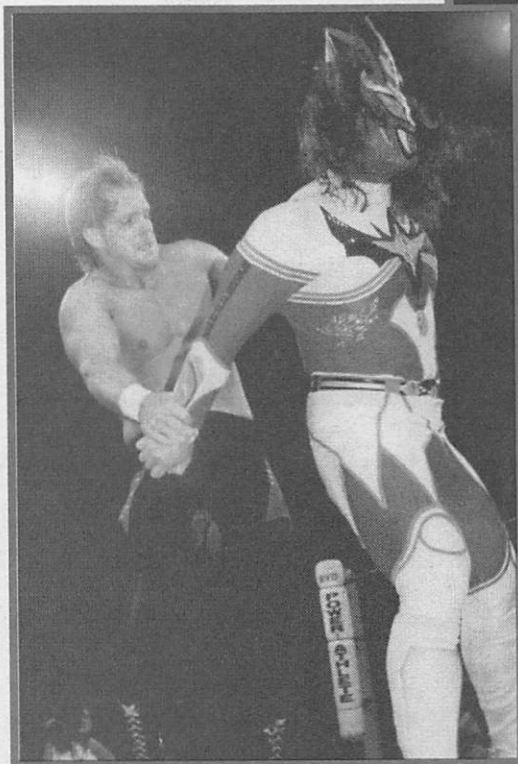
Liger would have nothing of the sort.

"I wanted a man who was established and a man was tech-



Chris Benoit keeps Jushin Liger tied up in a headscissors. "The Canadian Crippler" wasn't about to take it easy on Benoit just because it was his first match back ... especially not after hearing what Liger had to say before the bout.

Midway through the match, it looked like Benoit might do what Liger said and cripple him. He worked on Liger's arms for a while (below), then felled him with a belly-to-back suplex (right).



"It seemed so close to the surgery," El Samurai, a close friend of Liger, said through an interpreter. "The doctors gave him the medical clearance, but I thought Jushin was risking everything by wrestling Benoit right away."

Didn't matter to Liger. He still wanted Benoit.

Liger assured his close friends

that he needed this particular match to prove a point. They reluctantly relented.

But just before match time, Liger did something highly unusual. He walked into his opponent's locker room. He looked into Benoit's eyes, and Benoit stared right back.

"I told him that I wanted his best on that night," Liger recalled. "I told him not to feel any sympa-

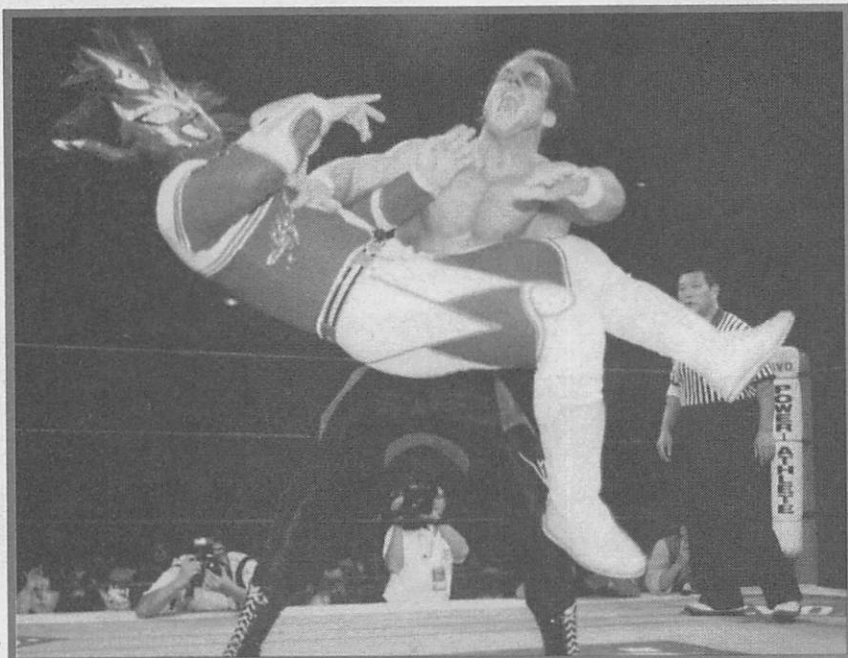
nically sound," Liger said through an interpreter. "And I wanted a man who had a mean streak, someone as tough as me."

The masked man has built his reputation on his ability to beat the best in professional wrestling in Japan and in the United States. He wanted someone who could test him, to force him to quickly overcome the psychological fears that are inevitable after serious surgery.

He hand-picked his opponent all right. He chose Chris Benoit.

"Liger knows that I don't hold back against anyone," said Benoit, "no matter what kind of problems he might be having. If you get in the ring with me, you're going to know that I'm out to beat you and hurt you."

Liger's closest confidantes urged him to re-think his choice. Did he really want to begin his comeback against "The Canadian Crippler"?



Perhaps what was most impressive about Liger in his comeback match was his ability to absorb so much punishment and still fight back.

thy for me. I told Chris Benoit to try to cripple me!"

The match featured a dazzling array of holds and counterholds mixed in with high-flying, high-impact moves. Liger did not hold back, and after the "pep talk" from his opponent, neither did Benoit. He forgot all about Liger's brain tumor and instead remembered his own nickname ... and what Liger instructed him to do.

Highlights of the match included a textbook crucifix and devastating piledriver from Benoit. Liger, meanwhile, delivered a beautiful dropkick off the top rope and a vicious power bomb. Both men were at their very best. The end came swiftly as Liger executed a bonecrushing suplex on Benoit.

The roar in the auditorium was

deafening as the two foes shook hands. Not only had the fans seen a tremendous match between two superstars, they had witnessed the triumphant return of a legitimate hero. A few months ago, some thought Liger would never get this chance.

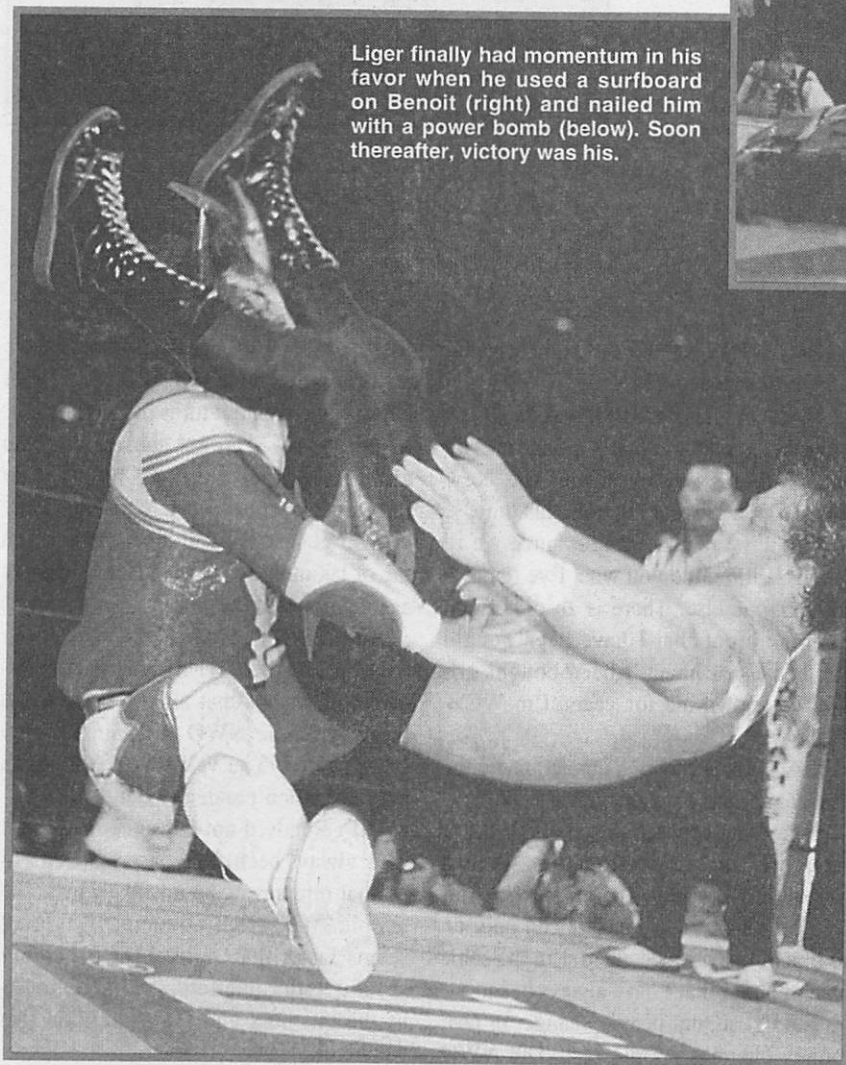
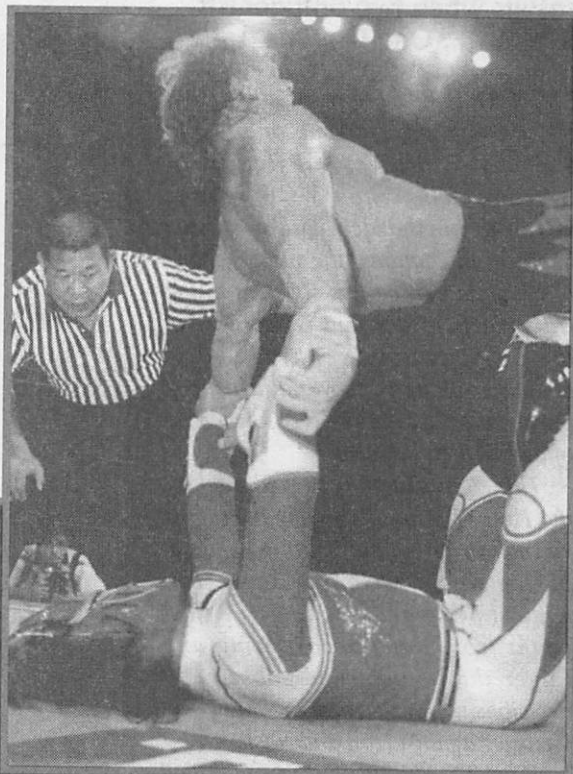
Although he hates to lose, Benoit was gracious to his opponent. No bitter post-match sneak-attack. No other Horsemen running into the ring. It was just him and Liger shaking hands and showing their respect for each other. Perhaps Benoit was in some way glad to see a fellow super-

star back and happy that Liger had wrestled so well. This was Liger's night.

"If that's Liger after a few months off ..." said Benoit. He didn't need to finish the sentence.

"Benoit gave me exactly what I

Liger finally had momentum in his favor when he used a surfboard on Benoit (right) and nailed him with a power bomb (below). Soon thereafter, victory was his.



asked him for," said Liger. "He helped me prove that I am back and back to stay. He didn't cripple me, but he gave me the match I wanted, and I was fortunate enough to come out on top. He will get a rematch."

A few months ago, Liger was worried that his life was in danger. Life-threatening situations have different effects on people. Some become overly cautious in their day-to-day routines and refuse to take risks. Others become reckless, living each day as if it was their last.

Liger fell somewhere in the middle. He was cautious for a while, but then he realized he makes a living being reckless and taking risks.

Liger's back ... and just as reckless as ever.

That's all he could ask for. ☐

The telephone wires sizzle each month, as two top wrestlers voice their rage and hostility toward each other. Here's the unedited transcript of their conversation, your chance to feel the raw emotion that results when two antagonists face off ... One On One

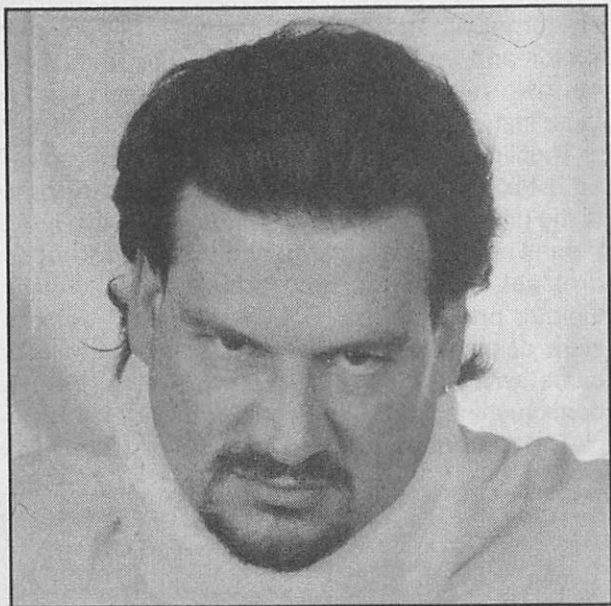
ONE ON ONE

IN THE PAST few months, Nick Patrick has become one of the most controversial figures in wrestling. The senior WCW referee has been bombarded with a cluster bomb of allegations, the most serious of which is that he has sold out to the New World Order and is secretly on the organization's payroll. His doubters say he is showing favoritism toward members of the NWO when he officiates their matches.

This ugly situation started back at the Hog Wild pay-per-view in August when Patrick was officiating a match pitting Kevin Nash and Scott Hall against Sting and Lex Luger. A fast count from Patrick cost Sting and Luger that match, and subsequent decisions by Patrick cost the duo clean victories against Hall and Nash.

Patrick's abilities have been called into question in matches involving WCW fan favorites such as Eddy Guerrero, Sgt. Craig Pittman, Jim Powers, and "Macho Man" Randy Savage. To date, Savage is the only man who, out of frustration, has attacked Patrick. Since that attack, Patrick has been wearing a neck brace. He even called for WCW to levy a \$1-million fine against Savage, but WCW officials decided \$500 was more appropriate.

Other referees are taking exception to some of Patrick's actions, most notably Randy Anderson, who demanded a forum to try to find out the truth once and for all. Anderson has built his reputation on honor and the ability to make fair decisions quickly and under pressure. He sees Patrick as a disgrace to wrestling referees everywhere. Patrick agreed to the exchange, and we were there to document this very intense (and unusual) "One On One."



"WCW has done so much for my career. Why would I throw it all away for an unproven, renegade promotion? The NWO threatens my livelihood as well."

—Nick Patrick

NICK PATRICK: All right, Randy, what is this all about?

RANDY ANDERSON: You know what this is about. What's going on with you? What's with you and the New World Order? I want the truth this time.

NP: First of all, Randy, since we're friends, I'll remind you what I've reminded everyone else: There is absolutely no concrete proof that I have been bought off, because I haven't been bought off. You've known me for years. I'm WCW all the way.

RA: Talk is cheap. Your actions in the ring are speaking much louder.

NP: What actions? A wrestling ring is an unpredictable environment. Things happen in the heat of the moment. A referee can only do so much. I can only do so much. I haven't changed. I'm the same man of honor that I have always been.

RA: Yeah, but people change. In fact, money changes people fast. The NWO

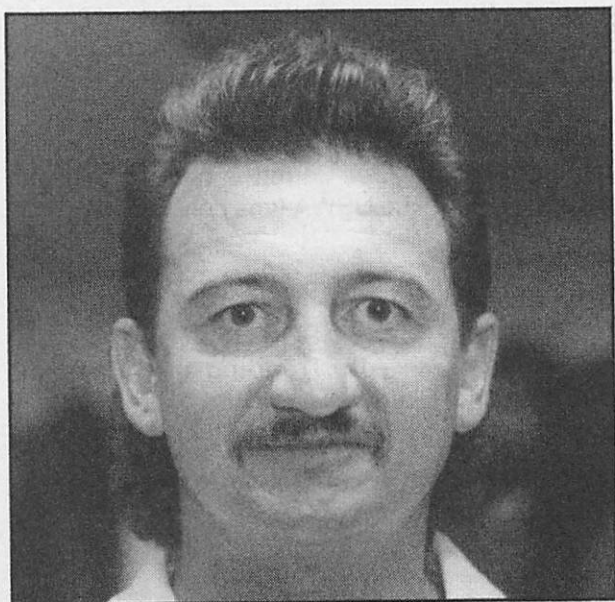
has the money to change people. I have no proof that you're NWO, but I just know you are, and it turns my stomach.

NP: Look—I'm not above suing you along with the others in WCW. Just remember what happened to that announcer who got on my bad side. He accused me of taking nice cars and Rolex watches as gifts from Hogan. Where is he now?

RA: Never mind that. What about those fast counts? What about the controversial decisions that always seem to go the way of the NWO or against Teddy Long's guys? You've always been a man of honor. I don't understand this.

NP: Randy, I am the same man that I have always been. You know as well as I do that referees make mistakes, pure and simple. We're only human. If a count seems faster than normal, or if I didn't see a wrestler interfere, that's the breaks of the business and the profession that we are in.

ONE



"Money changes people fast. The NWO has the money to change people. I have no proof that you're NWO, but I just know you are, and it turns my stomach."
—Randy Anderson

RA: You're missing my point.

NP: Your point? What is that? Are you perfect? You've made plenty of mistakes. I've covered your behind more than I care to mention. I've always defended you. This whole situation is getting completely out of hand.

RA: And you're not helping. You're the one who tried to hand out a \$1-million fine against Randy Savage, for crying out loud.

NP: Did you see what he did to me? Did you see how he manhandled me and almost crippled me? No one, but no one, does that to a WCW official. It is completely within my authority to suggest a fine that fits the crime. You should be glad I did. You should have backed me on that.

RA: But \$1-million?

NP: Did you know the damage that I suffered? My neck and back will never be the same again. It's next to impossible to

referee with that neck brace on and when I'm in so much pain.

RA: Then why not just take some time off?

NP: Are you nuts? With all the rumors going around, that would give WCW a reason to fire me. I need this job. I'm not like all these six-figure WCW wrestlers. I need this job, so I'll work injured if I have to.

RA: Even if it's affecting your job?

NP: Hey, you're the one that made these accusations well before this injury. Now I'm hurt, and all of you are piling it on even more. Kicking a man when he's down. Well, I'll show you all.

RA: By taking the NWO's dirty money?

NP: Watch it, Randy. I'm making the same income that I have always made. As far as extra possessions, let's just say that I have taken care of the money that I've made here. I happen to like nice cars and nice watches. Sue me.

RA: I've always conducted myself with honor. Sure, I've made my share of mistakes. But I've never done anything that has put my character in question. You're making trouble for yourself. Strange decisions, picking fights. And I can safely say that you have a bias against Teddy Long and his wrestlers.

NP: Let's talk about Teddy Long for a second. There was a man of honor. He was bought off, and look at him now. He will never be a referee again. He has some nerve accusing me. I will not be judged by him just because he has apparently turned over a new leaf.

RA: Teddy learned from his mistakes, and now he's pointing out yours. We gave him the benefit of the doubt. Now you want all of us to give you the same.

NP: That's right. I've been here longer than anyone. I deserve that consideration. You just wait. I plan to keep proving that I am an honest referee who is not tainted by money or anything else.

RA: Time will tell, I guess.

NP: That's right, and time will prove that I am right and you all are wrong. WCW has done so much for my career. Why would I throw it all away for an unproven, renegade promotion? The NWO threatens my livelihood as well, Randy.

RA: I guess I'm finding that hard to believe.

NP: Believe it. When it all comes down to it, I will prove my allegiance to WCW. It's a shame that I even have to. I'm tired, Randy. I'm tired of the lies, rumors, and allegations about me. People don't believe what I say. They'll have to believe what I do. You will see my side of the story.

RA: I hope so, but at this point, I don't see it happening.

NP: Then your mind is as closed as the others. I'm disappointed in you, Randy. I thought you were my friend.

RA: And I thought you were mine. I hope you're right and I'm wrong. I hope that you start calling your matches evenly and not favoring the NWO.

NP: There will come a day, Randy, when you will eat those words. And I'll be more than happy to serve them up.

RA: As your friend, Nick, I look forward to that day.

NP: So do I. □

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Sincerely Yours

(Continued from page 5)

BETTER OFF WITHOUT THEM

How could the USWA fans think that Jeff Jarrett made a mockery of the USWA heavyweight title when he held it ("USWA Fans To Jeff Jarrett: 'Get Out And Stay Out!'" December 1996)? Jeff Jarrett made the USWA what it is today. He held the tag team title more than a dozen times, the Southern title nine times, and the heavyweight title three times. Without the fans' help, he won the WWF Intercontinental title three times.

For years, he defended the USWA against anyone who invaded it.

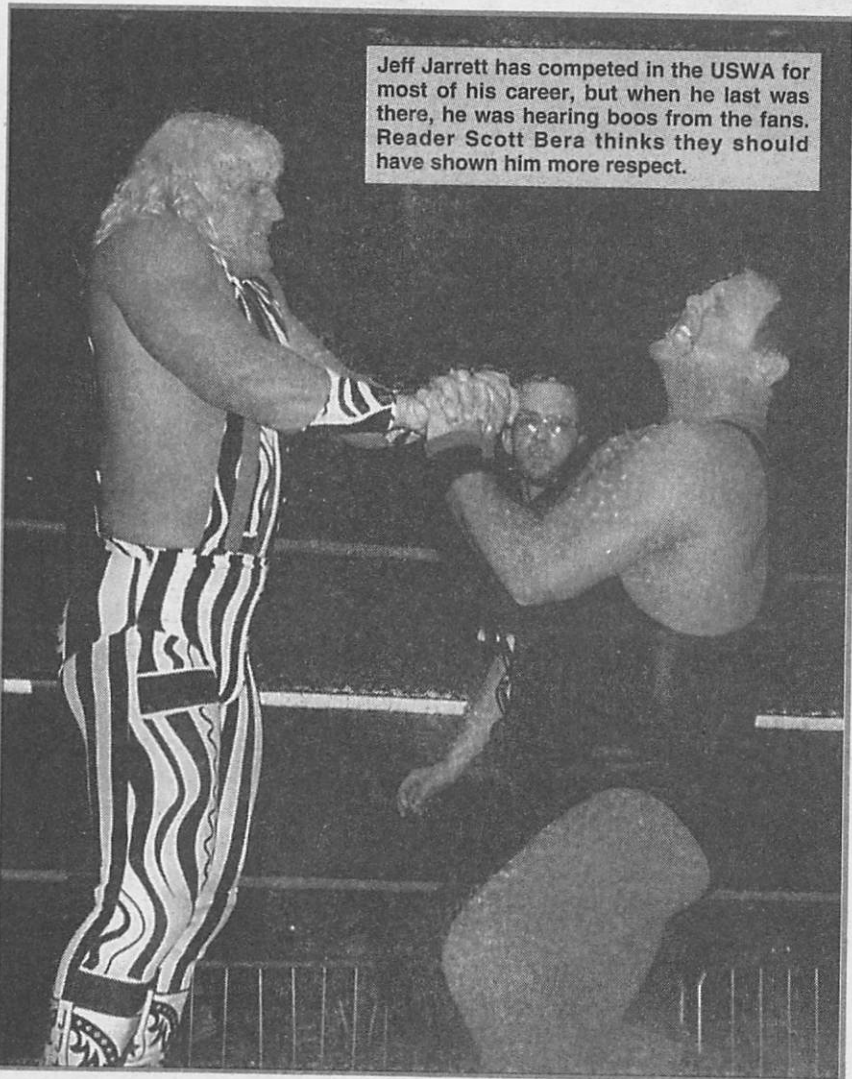
ed it. Even when he went to the WWF, he still had loyalty to the USWA. What did that loyalty get him? Nothing. The fans didn't respect him as a champion, so why should he have given them great matches against top competitors?

Jeff Jarrett is better off without the USWA fans behind him.

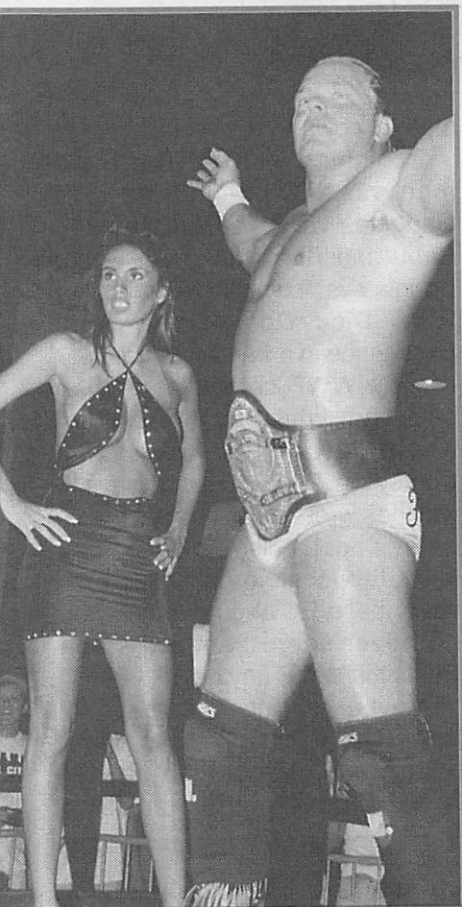
SCOTT BERA
Dunkirk, NY

EVERY DOG HAS ITS DAY

After reading the "Hotseat" interview with Pit Bull I (Holiday 1996), I have come to the conclusion...



Jeff Jarrett has competed in the USWA for most of his career, but when he last was there, he was hearing boos from the fans. Reader Scott Bera thinks they should have shown him more respect.



Shane Douglas (shown with his valet, Francine) might be the most hated man in ECW right now. Reader Rodney Vicer hopes Pit Bull I is able to recover from his neck injuries and get revenge on "The Franchise."

sion that Shane Douglas is one of the most despicable men in wrestling history. Douglas deserves to suffer an injury worse than a broken neck for what he did to Pit Bull I. Douglas may have ended the career of one of the best wrestlers in ECW, but I'm sure Pit Bull I will get his revenge somehow. I get sick to my stomach every time I see Shane and Francine on television laughing about what they have done.

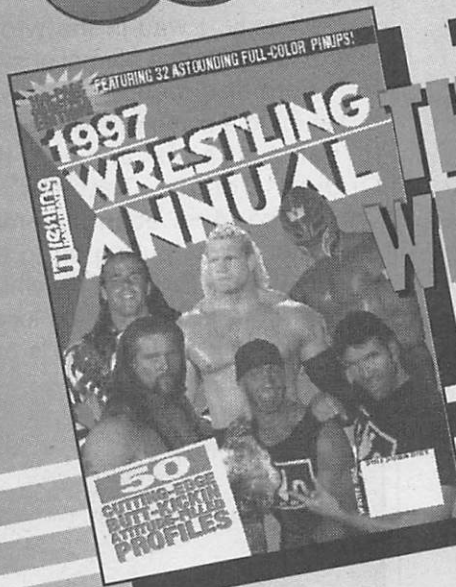
I hope that Pit Bull I can recover from this injury and someday return to the ring. I know the odds are against him, but as long as there is a chance, I will be pulling for his return.

RODNEY VICER
Marlton, NJ ☐

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PRESENTS...



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WRESTLING SUPERSTARS

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4373/09-96

On The Road

(Continued from page 10)

fortable bed in the world.

A few blocks ahead, I asked a woman who looked a little more sober if she knew how to get to the Orange County Fairgrounds.

"Hey, mister, you wanna date?" she asked.

"Excuse me?" I answered, slightly shocked.

"A date," she said. "You wanna go out?"

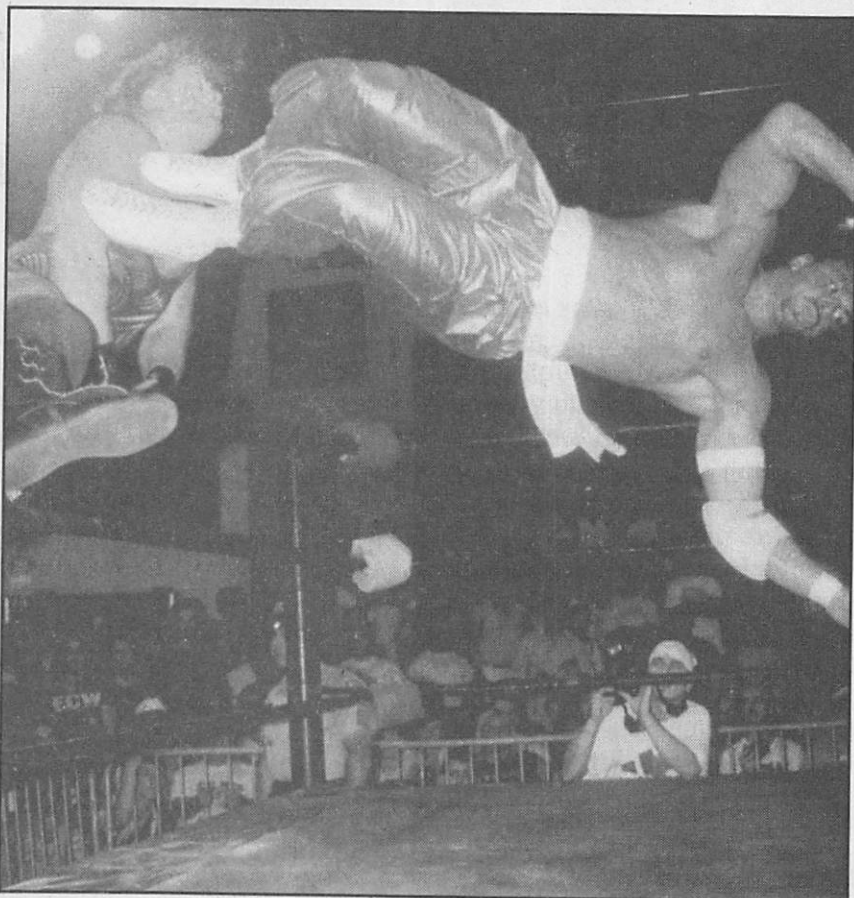
Obviously, I was in the wrong part of town to get a normal answer to a normal question. Finally, I pulled up to a place where I figured to get a straight answer: the Orange County Chamber of Commerce. And, about five minutes later, I was pulling up to the Orange County Fairgrounds, where during two weeks in July the locals battle for stuffed Barney dolls and

stare at cows.

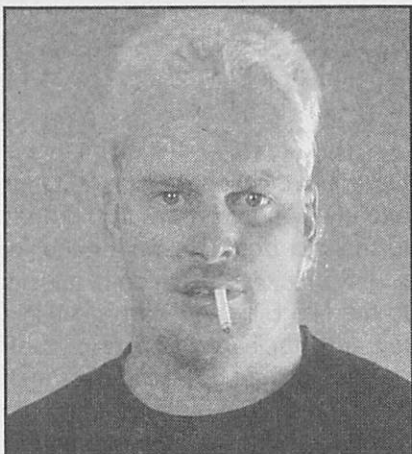
Tonight: wrestling. The Sandman vs. 2 Cold Scorpio. The Gangstas vs. The Eliminators vs. Sabu and Rob Van Dam. Shane Douglas vs. Tommy Dreamer. And "Big" Dick Dudley vs. Erotic Experience in a handicap match.

"The WWF comes here every once in a while, but I like this a whole lot better," said Nick Comerford, 26, a local who says he watches wrestling almost every day on TV. "I got a dish, so I can pull in all of the local wrestling and I've seen these ECW guys before, but I'd never seen them in person. Beats the WWF any day."

Maybe so, but I've always felt that ECW wrestling loses something when it's not held in ECW Arena. It's like the home-mat



Fans in Middletown, New York, appreciate matchups like Sabu vs. Rob Van Dam. They're a bit tired of the WWF, which tours that part of New York on occasion.



ECW heavyweight champ The Sandman feels a difference when wrestling at places other than the ECW arena, but he realizes that if ECW wants to compete with the WWF and WCW, it must expand its territory.

advantage. The seats are so close to the ring. This is different. Too wide open. It doesn't have the ECW feel. After The Sandman beat 2 Cold Scorpio to retain the heavyweight title, I went up to him and asked him if he felt out-of-place here.

"The fans are great, but it's different," Sandman said. "The thing is, if we're going to be popular everywhere, we gotta be everywhere, and especially in towns like this, where people are getting tired of the other stuff."

That's what I found while walking around and talking to the fans. They were getting tired of WCW and the WWF, especially the politicking in the two federations, and wanted to see some intense, blood-and-guts wrestling for a change.

As for me, well, getting out of Middletown proved to be the hard part. It was pitch-black, and following the traffic was impossible because I was one of the last people out of the building. Finally, I ended up in that same part of town, and saw the same drunken man. He was standing now, not sitting, when I pulled up to a light.

"You still looking for that fair?" he asked. "Man, even a drunk man know there ain't no fair in November." ☐

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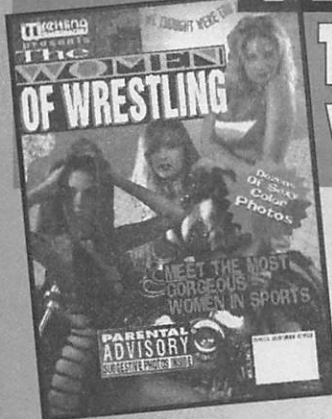
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Behind the Door

(Continued from page 12)

really want Sid to beat Michaels? That would bring us right back to the Hogan era. God, no!

NEWS ITEM: The WWF's *Monday Night Raw* has been moved one hour earlier to 7:57 p.m. Eastern and Pacific time in an attempt to better compete with *WCW Monday Nitro*, which has been airing two-hour shows since May. The WWF was concerned that viewers were tuning into *Nitro* at 8, then not bothering to switch to the USA Network for *Raw*.

GUT REACTION: This is what passes for wrestling news these days?

INFORMED REACTION: It's news because WCW vs. WWF revolves around the Monday night war. The time change was prompted by *Nitro*'s ratings victory over *Raw* on October 21, the night Bret Hart announced he would be returning to the WWF and Curt Hennig was supposed to return to the ring. The WWF can't afford to lose this war because TV has always been its strongest suit and the way it recruits new viewers. But is the WWF looking in the wrong place for answers? Maybe people were sticking with *Nitro* at 9 p.m. because they're finding WCW to be more interesting. The time change should help, but the WWF needs to take a serious look at its product, figure out what WCW's doing right and, counter—not copy—with some creativity of its own. No matter what time a program is on, fans will switch from *Nitro* to *Raw* if they're given the right reason. Judging from the ratings, the WWF hasn't been giving them reasons.

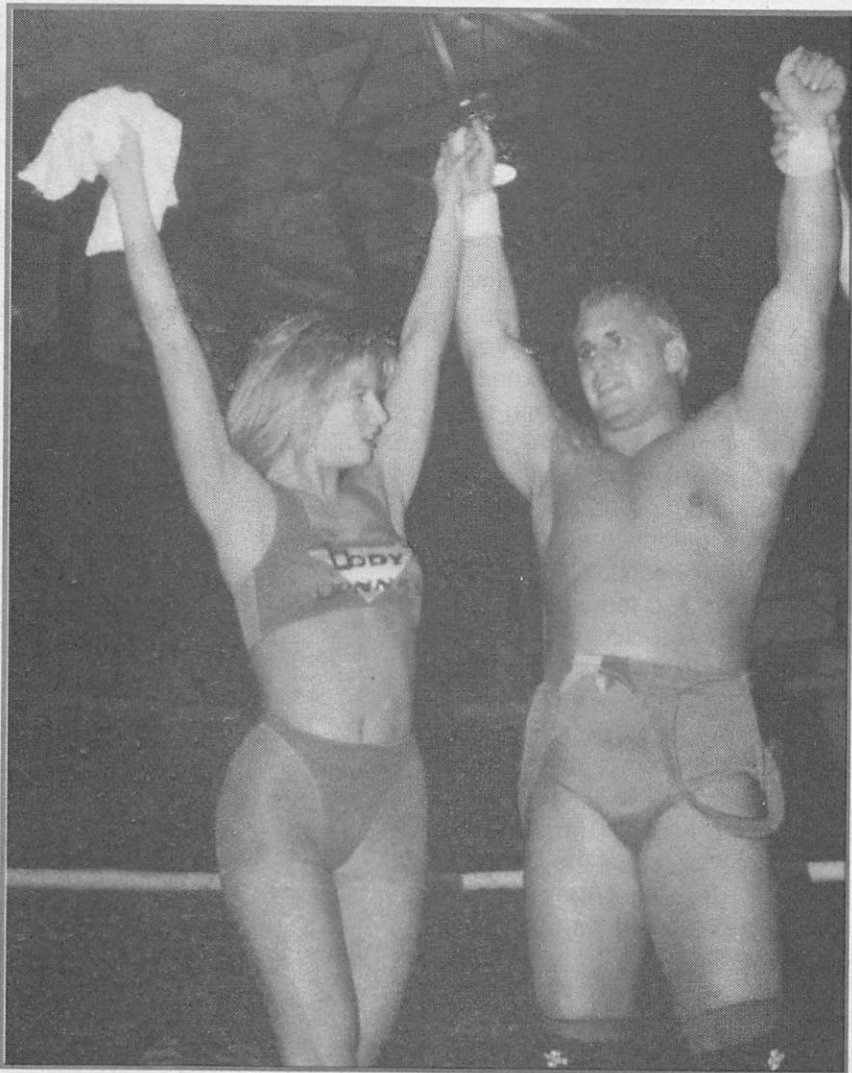
NEWS ITEM: Sunny, former manager of Chris Candido, says she's impressed with Billy Gunn and might manage his solo efforts. Meanwhile, Candido has returned to ECW without Sunny in tow.

GUT REACTION: Poor Candido.

Not only did he fail in his attempt to make it big in the WWF, but he lost his woman. As for Sunny, she's about to cause some serious and possible permanent trouble between Billy and Bart Gunn ... if she hasn't already.

INFORMED REACTION: If I was Chris Candido, and I lost a woman who looks like Sunny, I'd be pretty damn upset. Forget for a moment that she's a pain in the butt. She's a beautiful, intelligent pain in the butt who made Candido a better wrestler. His career is in

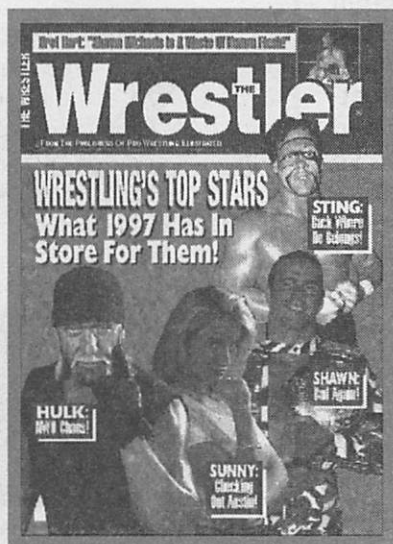
big trouble without her (as if it isn't already). As for Billy Gunn, he has to make a decision: His brother or Sunny? He can't have both. It looks to me like Billy and Bart are thinking with the wrong parts of their bodies. Instead of talking over their differences, they jumped right into a feud, and now they're going to cause permanent damage to their relationship. Big trouble. Sunny should just step aside for a few hours, or days, or months, or years, and let them settle their differences in a more dignified manner. □



Candidly, Rosenbaum can't see Chris being very happy or successful now that he's skipped the WWF and lost any possibility of reconciling with Sunny. His matches so far in ECW, however, would indicate otherwise.

This Month In...

THE Wrestler

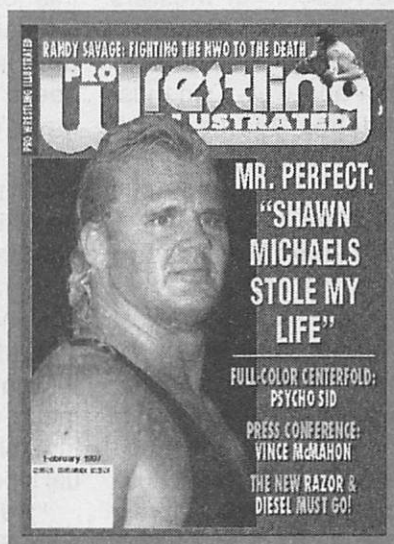


Another exciting year of wrestling has drawn to a close, but we're sure 1997 will give us just as many thrills. Where do you think your favorite stars are headed? We'll tell you what we think ... Do you ever wish you could sit down and talk to **BRET HART** about why he has such a big problem with **SHAWN MICHAELS**? We can't give you that opportunity, but we did ask Bret if he'd write a story explaining just what he thinks of Shawn and why. He did it—and called Shawn "a waste of human flesh!" ... Don't miss our very personal interview with **REY MISTERIO JR.**

All this—and much more!—
in the February 1997 issue of
The Wrestler

NOW ON SALE!

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED



"**MR. PERFECT**" **CURT HENNIG** has been sitting on the sidelines with a back injury for three years. He has watched **SHAWN MICHAELS** climb all the way to the top of the WWF and become World champ. He thinks it should be him at the top. He thinks Shawn stole his life, and he wants it back! ... You've seen all the beatings **RANDY SAVAGE** has taken at the hands of the NWO. He just keeps coming back. Will he fight the NWO to the death? ... Don't miss the candid "Press Conference" with **VINCE McMAHON**, or the full-color centerfold of "**PSYCHO**" **SID VICIOUS**.

All this—and much more!—
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mous task that is the "PWI 500." You start with twice as many wrestlers, rank the obvious, then work on the other 490. If I did it to please everyone, I'd still be working on the 1995 version. For wrestlers who complain about not being in it, I have these tidbits of advice: Wrestle often and well. Don't just win key matches; tell us about them. Send in news, pictures, and other stuff. And then, if you still don't make it? Well, tough.

"What's it like interviewing wrestlers?"

Some are cool. Some are jerks. I won't go into specific details or name names. It's the profession that I've chosen, so I persevere. The independent guys are much more accessible. But once the man's salary gets into six figures, you can be sure you'll be dealing with a six-figure attitude as well. Get the quote and get out. That's

my motto.

"Are you really Matt Brock's niece?"

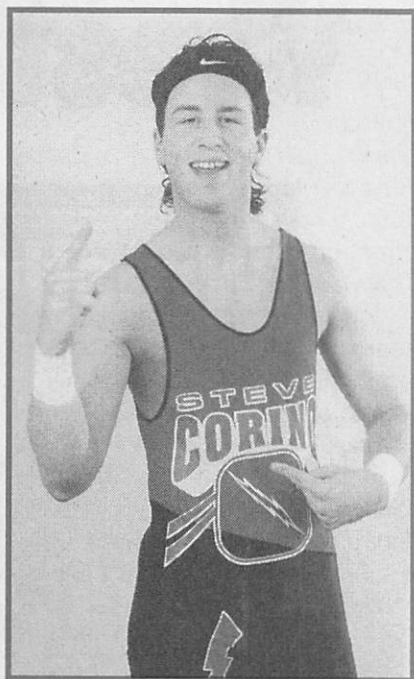
I hate to admit this, but I am. He had nothing to do with me getting this job. Since we have different last names, the link was not noticed until after I was hired. And it doesn't get me preferential treatment (see the aforementioned "500" question). Frankly, we've never seen eye-to-eye on much of anything. He was completely against me taking over Eddie's columns. Feeling a little jealous now that your prettiest niece is getting a larger spotlight, Uncle Matt? It might be time to put old (and I do mean old) Uncle Matt out to pasture, along with that relic of a manual typewriter that he uses.

"How will your columns differ from Eddie Ellner's?"

I explained this earlier. In a few months, you'll wish Eddie was back. If you favor the fan favorites, then this column will not be for you. I've been waiting a long time to air the dirty laundry of wrestling. So you'll pardon me if I vent for the next several years. One key difference: I will not make Bill Apter my whipping boy. Bill and I get along very well, despite our differing opinions. I have the utmost respect for him. Now Steve Anderson may be a different story. The guy just rubs me the wrong way.

"How can you be an open supporter of rulebreakers and serve as managing editor of the magazine at the same time?"

Every editor of this magazine, from Stu Saks right on down to Pushpak Naik, has opinions on the way things ought to be in wrestling. What's so good about this company is that if you prove that you can be objective in the day-to-day operations of the magazines, you can be trusted to share your views in



Steve Corino was very unhappy about being left out of the "PWI 500." In Steve's case, I'll admit, it was an oversight. But, Steve, if you really had such a great year, we couldn't have forgotten you.

your own column. INSIDE WRESTLING was the first magazine to have a "rulebreaking" writer, back in 1976. His name was Dan Shocket, and before his life was tragically cut short at a young age, he set the standard for everyone who followed, including Ellner, myself, and every copycat in every other magazine. I never met the man, but I was a huge fan of his and am honored to be filling his spot in the magazine all these years later.

So that's your lesson from Professor Brandi for this month. Make a mental note (you know, with your brain; there should be plenty of unused cells up there) of these questions and don't bother me with them anymore. Next month, I will deal with more important issues. And I'm sharpening my skewer. In the meantime, get some sun and get a date. And quit wishing that I was your femme fatale. □

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On Assignment

(Continued from page 16)

you on their payroll? Are you writing for them now?"

He had me there.

I offered him a proposition. I pulled out my tape recorder and offered to let him speak his peace. He accepted, but it was under his terms. I would ask him one general question, and he would answer. That would be it. I accepted.

"All right," I said, frantically searching for a great, yet general question. "If you could have five minutes to state your case, what would you say?"

"I am WCW all the way," he responded. "I have never taken a dime of NWO money, and I never will. I've been here for years, and my character has never been questioned. Now, because of a few misunderstandings, it is being *assassinated*."

"My job is to be fair and impartial, and that includes those guys from the NWO. As an official, I can't show bias against anyone. That includes Hogan, Hall, Nash, and the rest of that group. Why am I being attacked for just doing my job?"

"Finally, I will say this," Patrick

concluded. "Soon—very soon—you will know beyond a shadow of a doubt where Nick Patrick stands on this issue."

With that ominous prediction, Patrick's attorney, Alan "The Shyster" Sharp showed his ferret face and diminutive frame.

"Mr. Patrick, what do you think you're doing?" he said. "That's a reporter. We have to discuss these things first!"

Patrick looked at me instead of in the direction of that annoying drawl. He seemed ready to comply with his attorney's request. His eyes dropped to the floor, and he sulked away. For a fleeting moment, I believed that Patrick was the victim in all of this.

Then, when he thought I wasn't looking, he walked by Sharp, chucked him on the shoulder, and gave him a wink. When he saw that I was viewing this, he immediately returned to the sad clown look. He and Sharp walked off into the shadows. I honestly didn't know what to think.

One minute, Nick Patrick gives you reason to believe him, and the

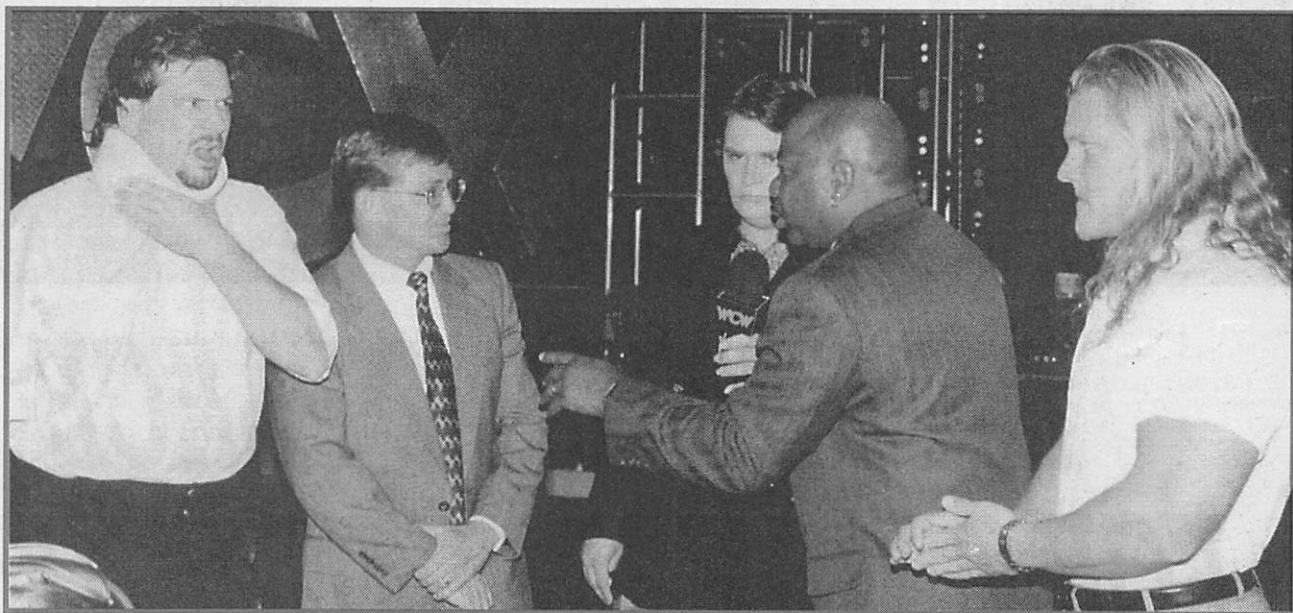
next minute, he gives you reason to pause and consider what could be the truth.

Just then, the NWO's dressing room door burst open. I was startled to see Vincent coming right at me. Not looking where he was going, he knocked me and my now-broken tape recorder down. He looked at me with disdain and just kept moving. Fortunately, my camera suffered no damage.

As I collected the remnants of my recorder, I noticed that he had dropped something. It was a sealed envelope with what was apparently several hundred dollar bills inside it. In big red letters, it read, "For N." Fearing confrontations with any other NWO member, I fled the area, leaving that envelope where I found it.

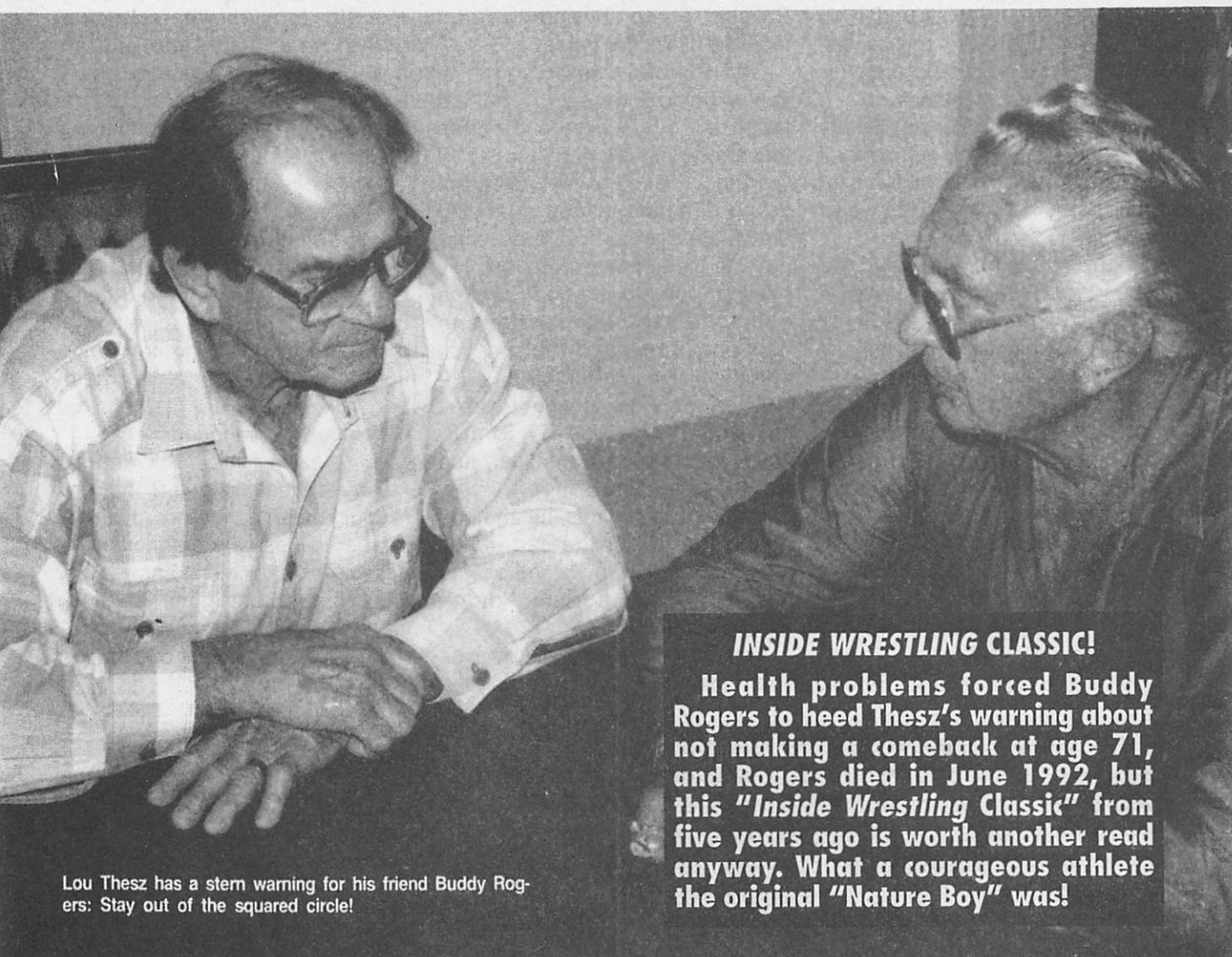
N ... as in Nick. Nick Patrick. *Hardly a smoking gun*, I thought. N could mean anyone or anything. That envelope with the incriminating scarlet letter didn't answer any questions. It just made me even more suspicious.

Just like the actions of a certain referee. □



Patrick now has an attorney, Alan Sharp, working for him full-time, and neither Teddy Long nor Chris Jericho is happy about that. Patrick still says he's not with the NWO.

LOU THESZ' IMPASSIONED PLEA TO BUDDY ROGERS:



Lou Thesz has a stern warning for his friend Buddy Rogers: Stay out of the squared circle!

INSIDE WRESTLING CLASSIC!

Health problems forced Buddy Rogers to heed Thesz's warning about not making a comeback at age 71, and Rogers died in June 1992, but this "Inside Wrestling Classic" from five years ago is worth another read anyway. What a courageous athlete the original "Nature Boy" was!

THE RING IS NO PLACE FOR A 71-YEAR-OLD MAN!

In what is sure to be one of 1992's major stories, 71-year-old Buddy Rogers is preparing to not only make a wrestling comeback, but to take on Tri-State champion Buddy Landell in January. Last year, 74-year-old Lou Thesz tried a similar comeback—and knows just how dangerous such a match can be!

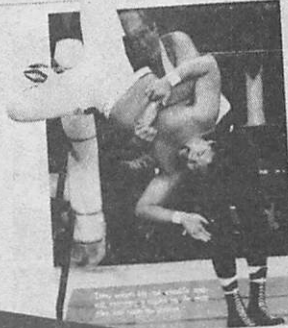
Six-time former NWA World champion Lou Thesz became the sport's first seven-decade man when he wrestled on December 26 in Japan. Thesz lost, but his legend grew.



By Dave Rosenbaum

AT AN AGE when most people have been reduced to an "active" life of shuffleboard and bridge, Lou Thesz wrestled. At an age when most grandfathers play his surely games of catch with their grandchildren, Thesz, at 74, wrestled a man young enough to be his grandson. One would think Thesz would have been happy just to be in the ring again, reliving his past glories. He wasn't. He wanted to win. "My hip didn't perform as well as I wanted it to," Thesz said after losing to 27-year-old Masa Chono on December 26 in Hamamatsu, Japan. "The promoters thought I did okay, but I didn't. I'm my most severe critic."

miracle man!



These words say all one needs to know about Thesz. Age is not a barrier to this magnificent individual. He has remained in the kind of shape men half his age would envy, although Thesz won't admit it. "I'm in pretty decent shape for a 74-year-old man," Thesz said. "I felt fine. Everything was fine, physically and mentally." His confidence hasn't waned. When the New Japan promotion contacted him about wrestling and asked whether he was in shape, Thesz replied: "Yes, I stay that way." Thesz, in fact, works out for nearly two hours every day at the gym he runs in Norfolk, Virginia. He wrestles frequently with trainer Mark Fleming and many of the people who came to the gym. "I love it," Thesz said. "I breathe it. It's all I do, it's all I ever wanted to do. To me, it's like riding a bike. I want to perpetuate wrestling. I do it all the time for nothing. When they called me, I figured I might as well do it for money." Thesz didn't have to increase his training to prepare for the match; he was already in wrestling shape. Thesz simply kept doing what he had been doing all along. "It was actually the first time I had wrestled professionally in a couple of years," Thesz said. "I take an occasional match, but not too often." Chono, who trained under Thesz for several years.

In December 1990, the 74-year-old Thesz wrestled one of his students, 27-year-old Masa Chono, in Japan. He says what he experienced in that encounter drove him to caution Rogers about a similar comeback.

By Bob Smith

LOU THESZ DOESN'T get around the way he used to. After all, the legendary six-time former NWA World champion is nearly 75 years old! He still works out and stays in magnificent condition, but Thesz is very content to quietly enjoy his retirement at his Virginia Beach estate.

During early autumn, however, Thesz received some news that disturbed his peaceful existence. A friend was in need, and he needed to be there.

Of course, if you asked that friend if he was in need, Buddy Rogers would have laughed off the suggestion. At the age of 71, the original "Nature Boy" remains in the same kind of outstanding physical condition as Thesz. Rogers also remains a fiercely proud

man, as cocky as he ever was during his glory years—the '50s and '60s—when the "Rogers strut" was the trademark of the former NWA and WWF World champion.

Rogers was startled one morning when the doorbell rang at his Florida home in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea. When he saw Thesz, his once-hated rival who beat him for the NWA title in 1963, he couldn't believe his eyes.

"Why, you old stick in the mud!" laughed Rogers as he shook hands with Thesz. "What in the world are you doing in Florida, champ?"

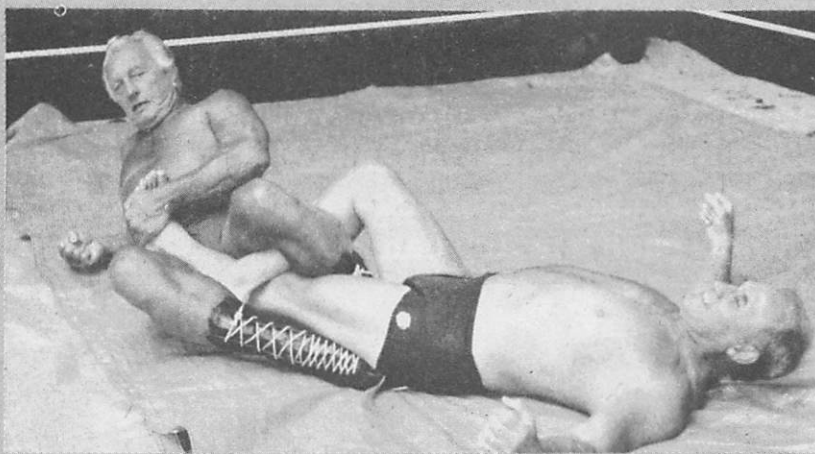
"I came here to see you," said an unsmiling Thesz. Noting his former rival's stern countenance, Rogers invited Thesz to come in

and sit down. It was a typical Florida day—warm and sunny—but Thesz' gloomy demeanor wasn't altered by the pleasant weather.

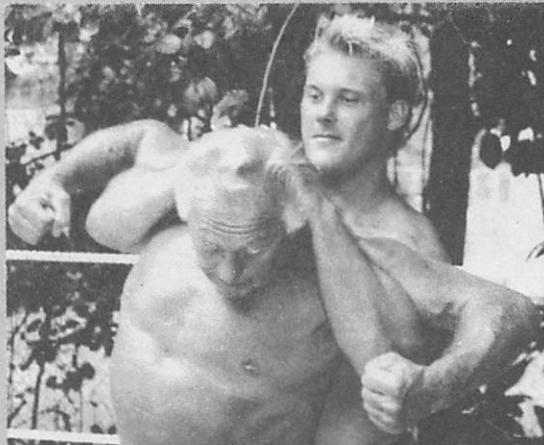
"What's wrong, Lou?" asked Rogers as the former champions made their way into the living room. "You look as if you've lost your best friend."

"I haven't—at least, not yet," said Thesz as he sat down. "But I've got to warn you, Buddy: You're making the mistake of your life if you wrestle Buddy Landell [on January 25 in Philadelphia.] This is really a vicious young man—and he's in his prime."

"You think I care about that?" said Rogers, nearly laughing at the suggestion that he couldn't make a



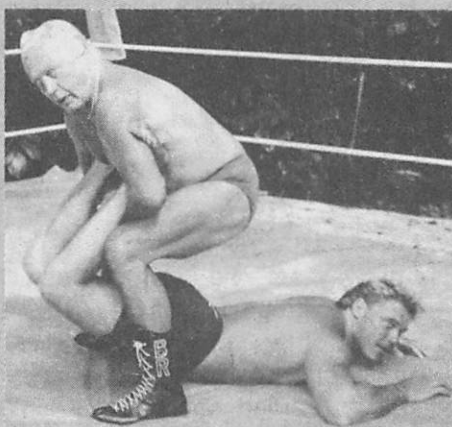
Veteran grappler Billy Darnell (above) and Rogers' son, David (right), train the original "Nature Boy" for his return.



David, who has a tough time flipping his dad (below), swears his father still would give any man in the sport a close contest.



Rogers says he's tired of testing himself against his son (top right) and Yukon Lou (right); he wants Tri-State champ Buddy Landell—and wants him now!



triumphant ring comeback. "Landell doesn't concern me at all. I'll beat him, and I'll take that Tri-State title he holds. What's the problem, Lou?"

"Isn't it obvious?" asked Thesz. "The ring is just no place for a 71-year-old man like you. I ought to know—I tried it, and it's just not worth it."

Rogers' January comeback will come 13 months after Thesz himself made his one-night comeback. It was on December 26, 1990, in Hamamatsu City, Japan, that Thesz, then 74, took on a man he once helped train, Masa Chono, in a scientific match.

Thesz, hobbled by an artificial hip and the natural slowness brought by aging, still managed to compete at an amazing level. Thesz showed he was still a technical wrestling master, locking up the 27-year-old Chono in armlocks several times. However, Thesz was defeated by submission in 5:10 when Chono caught Thesz in a combination toehold and facelock—the same hold that Thesz had taught Chono several years earlier.

"You see, Buddy, my situation was totally different," reasoned Thesz. "I was wrestling Chono in a purely scientific bout. He's a man I've known ever since he was a teenager—so he wasn't in there to put a hurt on me—and I still felt awful after the match was over. The body just can't take it anymore. You're going to be taking on Landell, a guy who's crippled dozens of men *his own age*—and he cares about nobody but himself. Face it, Buddy, it's just too big a risk for men our age to take."

Rogers listened to what Thesz had to say, but he wasn't telling him anything he hadn't considered on his own. But his decision was really made on October 26, the day he made a guest appearance as a special referee for a Steve Williams-Bam Bam Bigelow match in Pine Hill, New Jersey. Rogers

took the assignment very seriously. He knew a matchup of two of the sport's top stars deserved only top-level officiating. He worked out hard for a month prior to the match, and many fans were astounded by his spryness and agility. He also displayed the famous Rogers temper when he disqualified Bigelow for ripping his shirt.

Later on the card, Rogers was being interviewed by Tri-State President Joel Goodhart when Landell, who earlier in the evening captured the Tri-State title from popular J.T. Smith, interrupted the conversation. Probably because he's always been compared unfavorably with Rogers and Ric Flair, Landell resents the two wrestlers who have used the "Nature Boy" nickname before him. Landell challenged Rogers to a bout with his title—and nickname—on the line. Rogers didn't even hesitate before responding. "I've got one more good match in me," he said. "Challenge accepted."

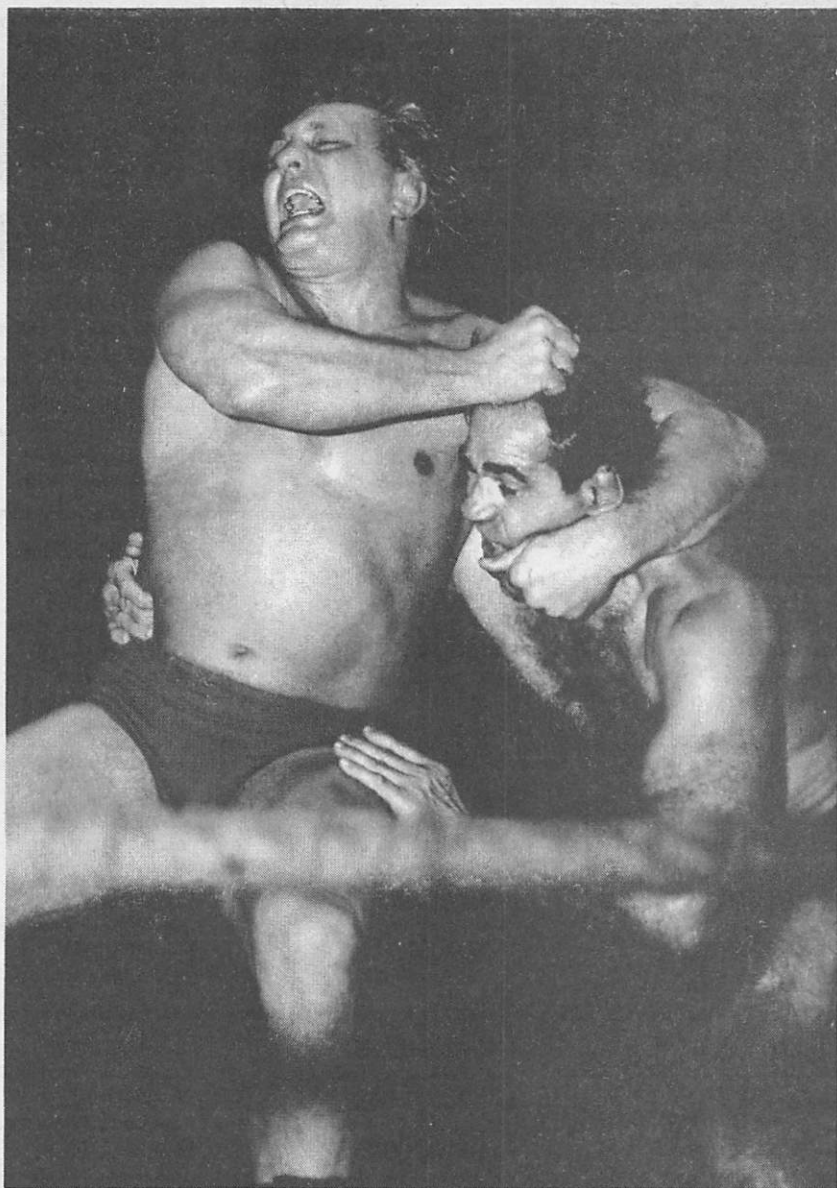
As match time comes closer, Rogers only gains in confidence and determination. To prove himself, Rogers invited Thesz outside, where he was about to begin his daily training sessions with his son, David, veteran Billy Darnell, and huge 275-pound Yukon Lou, who oversees the two-hour sessions. Lou has Rogers undergo 30 minutes of stretching and light weightlifting before going 20 minutes with each sparring partner. "He's getting stronger and in better shape by the day," said Lou as he watched Buddy immobilize David with arm- and leglocks.

"Landell's going to have his butt handed to him," said a sweating Rogers after the training session was completed.

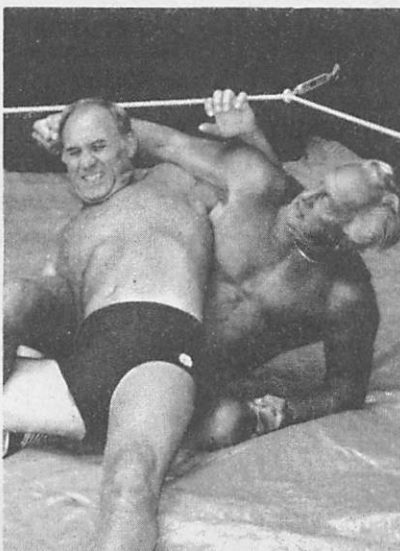
Thesz was impressed, but not convinced.

"Facts are facts, Buddy," he reasoned. "Landell is 41 years younger than you are. It's suicide."

"No way you can talk me out of this one, Lou," said Rogers. "You



In 1963, Rogers lost the NWA title to Thesz (above), who insists Rogers could get badly hurt wrestling a dangerous rulebreaker like Landell. Darnell, though (below), may disagree!



see, wrestling is in my blood again—and only one more victory will help me get over it. I'll tell you what—I'll make a deal with you. If I beat Landell, I'll think about what you've told me. Maybe I'll make a comeback and have a retirement party all at the same time—and you're invited."

Realizing he was not going to prevent the Rogers-Landell bout, Thesz returned to Virginia Beach. The next day, he resumed his usual pastimes of gardening, jogging—and worrying.

Thesz knew he wouldn't feel right again until January 26. □

OFFICIAL RATINGS

TOP 15

1—SID VICIOUS

(3) WWF World champion

2—LEX LUGER

(6) No. 1 contender: WCW World title

3—SHAWN MICHAELS

(1) No. 2 contender: WWF World title

4—STING

(4) No. 6 contender: WCW World title

5—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

(7) WWF Intercontinental champion

6—BRET HART

(-) No. 3 contender: WWF World title

7—DEAN MALENKO

(9) WCW cruiserweight champion

8—STEVE AUSTIN

(12) No. 4 contender: WWF World title

9—THE UNDERTAKER

(5) No. 5 contender: WWF World title

10—REY MISTERIO JR.

(8) No. 1 contender: WCW cruiserweight title

11—HULK HOGAN

(-) WCW World champion

12—BIG VAN VADER

(14) No. 8 contender: WWF World title

13—LORD STEVEN REGAL

(-) WCW TV champion

14—RANDY SAVAGE

(2) No. 9 contender: WCW World title

15—THE SANDMAN

(13) ECW heavyweight champion

WCW

1—HULK HOGAN

(1) 275, Venice Beach, CA

2—LEX LUGER

(5) 265, Chicago, IL

3—DEAN MALENKO

(8) 216, Tampa, FL

4—THE GIANT

(6) 430, parts unknown

5—JEFF JARRETT

(9) 230, Nashville, TN

6—LORD STEVEN REGAL

(-) 247, Blackpool, England

7—STING

(4) 260, Venice Beach, CA

8—REY MISTERIO JR.

(7) 140, San Diego, CA

9—CHRIS BENOIT

(13) 218, Edmonton, Alberta

10—RANDY SAVAGE

(3) 237, Sarasota, FL

11—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE

(14) 260, Tampa, FL

12—EDDY GUERRERO

(11) 221, Los Angeles, CA

13—SIX

(10) 212, Minneapolis, MN

14—CHRIS JERICO

(12) 225, Vancouver, British Columbia

15—PSICOSIS

(-) 200, Tijuana, Mexico

WWF

1—SID VICIOUS

(3) 318, West Memphis, AR

2—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

(2) 279, Greenwich, CT

3—SHAWN MICHAELS

(1) 234, San Antonio, TX

4—BRET HART

(-) 235, Calgary, Alberta

5—STEVE AUSTIN

(7) 241, Dallas, TX

6—THE UNDERTAKER

(4) 328, parts unknown

7—FAAROOQ

(11) 260, Perry, GA

8—MARC MERO

(5) 235, Buffalo, NY

9—BIG VAN VADER

(9) 450, Denver, CO

10—MANKIND

(8) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM

11—THE SULTAN

(-) 283, Tehran, Iran

12—GOLDUST

(6) 254, Austin, TX

13—BARRY WINDHAM

(-) 273, Sweetwater, TX

14—CRUSH

(-) 322, Kona, HI

15—JUSTIN BRADSHAW

(15) 309, Roscoe, TX

MOST POPULAR

1—BRET HART

Last issue: No. 5 Most Popular

2—LEX LUGER

Last issue: No. 4 Most Popular

3—SID VICIOUS

Last issue: No. 3 Most Popular

4—THE UNDERTAKER

Last issue: No. 6 Most Popular

5—RANDY SAVAGE

Last issue: No. 2 Most Popular

6—SHAWN MICHAELS

Last issue: No. 1 Most Popular

7—REY MISTERIO JR.

Last issue: No. 7 Most Popular

8—MARC MERO

Last issue: No. 9 Most Popular

9—JAKE ROBERTS

Last issue: No. 12 Most Popular

10—THE SANDMAN

Last issue: No. 14 Most Popular

11—TOMMY DREAMER

Last issue: No. 11 Most Popular

12—EDDY GUERRERO

Last issue: No. 10 Most Popular

13—YOKOZUNA

Last issue: unrated

14—CHRIS JERICO

Last issue: No. 13 Most Popular

15—ROCKY MAIVIA

Last issue: unrated

MOST HATED

1—HULK HOGAN

Last issue: No. 1 Most Hated

2—STEVE AUSTIN

Last issue: No. 9 Most Hated

3—SCOTT HALL

Last issue: No. 3 Most Hated

4—KEVIN NASH

Last issue: No. 4 Most Hated

5—THE GIANT

Last issue: No. 8 Most Hated

6—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

Last issue: No. 5 Most Hated

7—FAAROOQ

Last issue: No. 7 Most Hated

8—JERRY LAWLER

Last issue: No. 6 Most Hated

9—MANKIND

Last issue: No. 2 Most Hated

10—SIX

Last issue: No. 14 Most Hated

11—BIG VAN VADER

Last issue: No. 11 Most Hated

12—SHANE DOUGLAS

Last issue: No. 13 Most Hated

13—GOLDUST

Last issue: No. 10 Most Hated

14—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE

Last issue: No. 15 Most Hated

15—BILLY GUNN

Last issue: unrated

TOP 15 TAG TEAMS

1—OWEN HART & DAVEY BOY SMITH

(2) WWF World tag team champions

2—SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH

(3) WCW World tag team champions

3—HARLEM HEAT

(1) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title

4—HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN

(9) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title

5—THE NASTY BOYS

(5) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title

6—THE GANGSTAS

(6) ECW tag team champions

7—THE ELIMINATORS

(8) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title

8—MARCUS BAGWELL & SCOTTY RIGGS

(15) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title

9—THE BARBARIAN & MENG

(7) No. 4 contenders: WCW World tag title

10—BILL & JAMIE DUNDEE

(10) No. 1 contenders: USWA tag title

11—LEIF CASSIDY & MARTY JANNETTY

(13) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title

12—DOUG FURNAS & PHIL LAFON

(4) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title

13—THE GRIMM TWINS

(11) No. 4 contenders: WWF World tag title

14—SABU & ROB VAN DAM

(-) No. 2 contenders: ECW tag title

15—THE BUSHWHACKERS

(14) No. 5 contenders: WWF World tag title

These ratings are compiled by the editors with the assistance of promoters, wrestlers, and reporters around the country, and are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue... "Most Popular" and "Most Hated" ratings are based on nationwide surveys of wrestling fans and on mail that comes to our offices ... Championships highlighted in bold on the "Roll Call Of Champions" have changed hands since our previous issue ... The information under the championship listing indicates the date that champion won the title, who the former champion was, and where the match took place.

For period ended November 17, 1996

ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS

ALL-JAPAN ASIAN TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: JUN AKIYAMA & TAKAO OMORI
(January 29, 1995; from Bobby Fulton & Tommy Rogers; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION: KENTA KOBASHI
(July 24, 1996; from Akira Taue; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: YOSHINARI OGAWA
(September 3, 1995; from Dan Kroffat; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN UNITED NATIONAL CHAMPION: KENTA KOBASHI
(July 24, 1996; from Akira Taue; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S ALL-PACIFIC CHAMPION: YUMIKO HOTTA
(September 24, 1995; from Toshiyo Yamada; Kawasaki, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S CHAMPION: DYNAMITE KANSAI
(August 30, 1995; from Aja Kong; Osaka, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHIKAYA NAGASHIMA & SUGAR SATO
(September 1, 1996; from Yumi Fukawa & Rie Tamada; Tokyo, Japan)

ALL-STATE WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: THE BLACK ASSASSIN
(October 21, 1995; from Billy Orderly; Fountain City, TN)

ALL-STATE WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: E.F. HUTTON & ERIC ROSE
(June 14, 1996; from Alex & Felix Hutton; Maryville, TN)

AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: T. RANTULA
(March 26, 1994; from Rip Sawyer; Johnsonburg, PA)

AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JOHNNY GRAHAM
(October 14, 1995; from Lord Zoltan; Lewistown, PA)

ECW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: THE SANDMAN
(October 5, 1996; beat Stevie Richards; Philadelphia, PA)

ECW TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE GANGSTAS
(August 3, 1996; from The Eliminators; Philadelphia, PA)

ECW TELEVISION CHAMPION: SHANE DOUGLAS
(July 13, 1996; from Chris Jericho; Philadelphia, PA)

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(April 29, 1996; from Nobuhiko Takada; Tokyo, Japan)

NWA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: DAN SEVERN
(February 24, 1995; from Chris Candido; Erlanger, KY)

NWA NORTH AMERICAN HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RECKLESS YOUTH
(September 7, 1996; beat Derek Domino; Yardville, NJ)

NORTH AMERICAN ALL-STAR WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: THE COLORADO KID
(June 16, 1996; from Justin St. John; Poplar Bluff, MO)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION CHAMPION: KENTA KOBASHI
(July 24, 1996; from Akira Taue; Tokyo, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: JOHNNY ACE & STEVE WILLIAMS
(September 5, 1996; from Jun Akiyama & Mitsuharu Misawa; Tokyo, Japan)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: FREIGHT TRAIN JONES
(November 1, 1996; from Mark Mest; Reading, PA)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: ROMEO CATINO & BOOGIE WOOGIE BROWN
(September 27, 1996; from Chef D.Z. Gillespie and Mr. Ooh La La; Reading, PA)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: GEORGE SOUTH
(August 3, 1996; from Carolina Dreamer; Mooresville, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MADD MAXXINE
(August 24, 1996; beat Black Angel; Forest City, NC)

TRI-STAR WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: THE OUTPATIENT
(June 14, 1996; from Jimmy Sharpe; Rossville, GA)

TRI-STAR WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHUCK COLT & RICK JUSTICE
(May 10, 1996; from The New One Man Gang & Joel Travis; Rossville, GA)

USWA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JERRY LAWLER
(November 16, 1996; from The Colorado Kid; Memphis, TN)

USWA SOUTHERN CHAMPION: RIC HOGAN
(October 29, 1996; from Brian Christopher; Louisville, KY)

USWA TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BILL & JAMIE DUNDEE
(August 20, 1996; from The Moondogs; Louisville, KY)

WCW CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: DEAN MALENKO
(October 27, 1996; from Rey Misterio Jr.; Las Vegas, NV)

WCW TELEVISION CHAMPION: LORD STEVEN REGAL
(August 20, 1996; from Lex Luger; Dalton, GA)

WCW U.S. CHAMPION: TITLE VACANT
(Most recently held by Ric Flair)

WCW WORLD CHAMPION: HULK HOGAN
(August 10, 1996; from The Giant; Sturgis, SD)

WCW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH
(October 27, 1996; from Harlem Heat; Las Vegas, NV)

WORLD WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JIM McPHERSON
(October 7, 1995; from Chris Evans; Clementon, NJ)

WORLD WRESTLING ALLIANCE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: BAD ATTITUDE
(June 3, 1995; from Doomsday Express; Clementon, NJ)

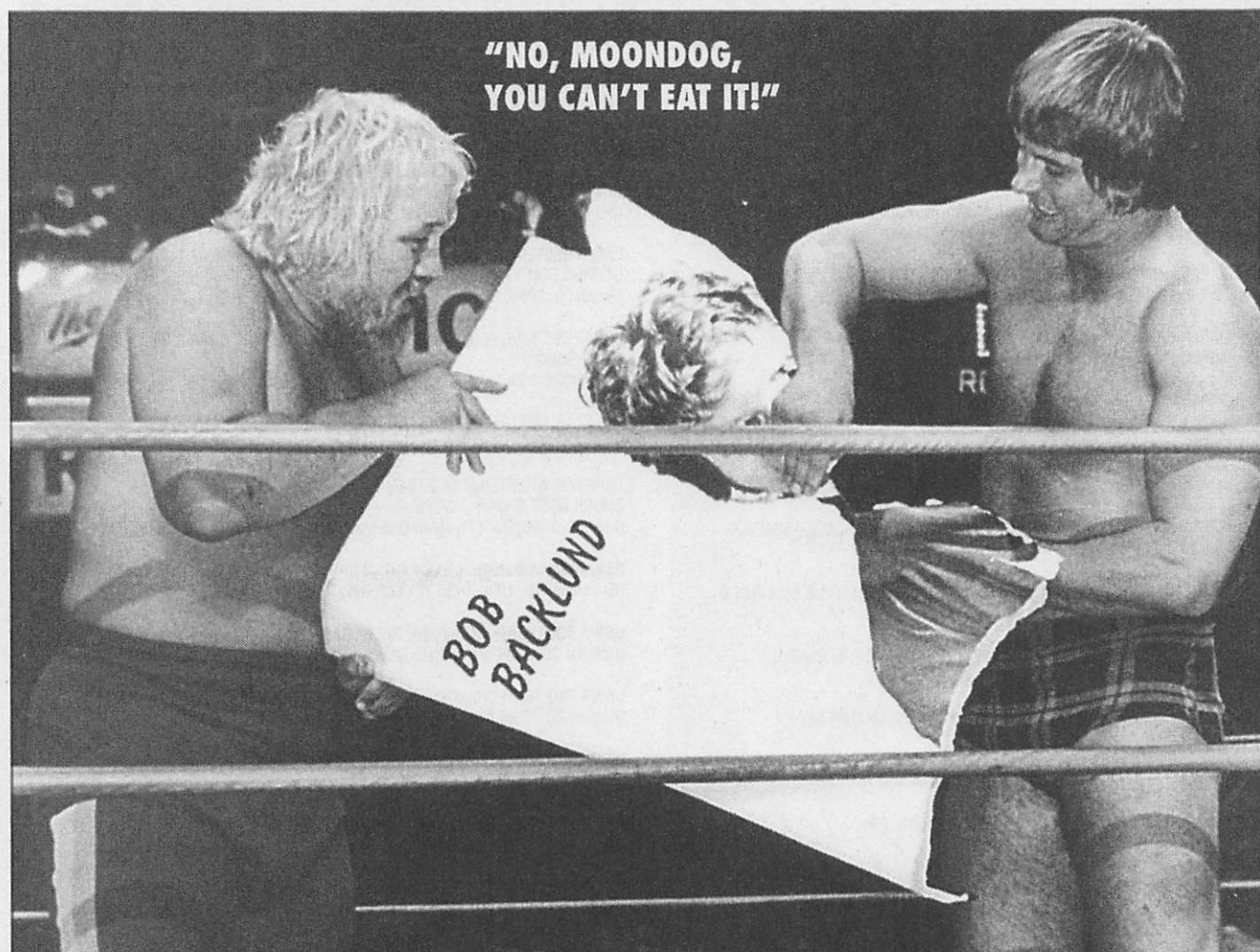
WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY
(October 21, 1996; from Marc Mero; Fort Wayne, IN)

WWF WORLD CHAMPION: "PSYCHO" SID VICIOUS
(November 17, 1996; from Shawn Michaels; New York, NY)

WWF WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: OWEN HART & DAVEY BOY SMITH
(September 22, 1996; from The Smokin' Gunns; Philadelphia, PA)

BLAST FROM THE PAST

This Month In Wrestling History

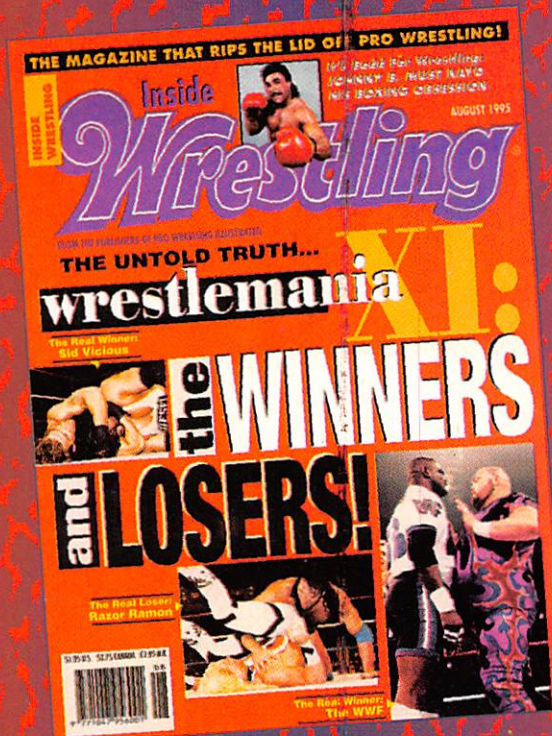


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